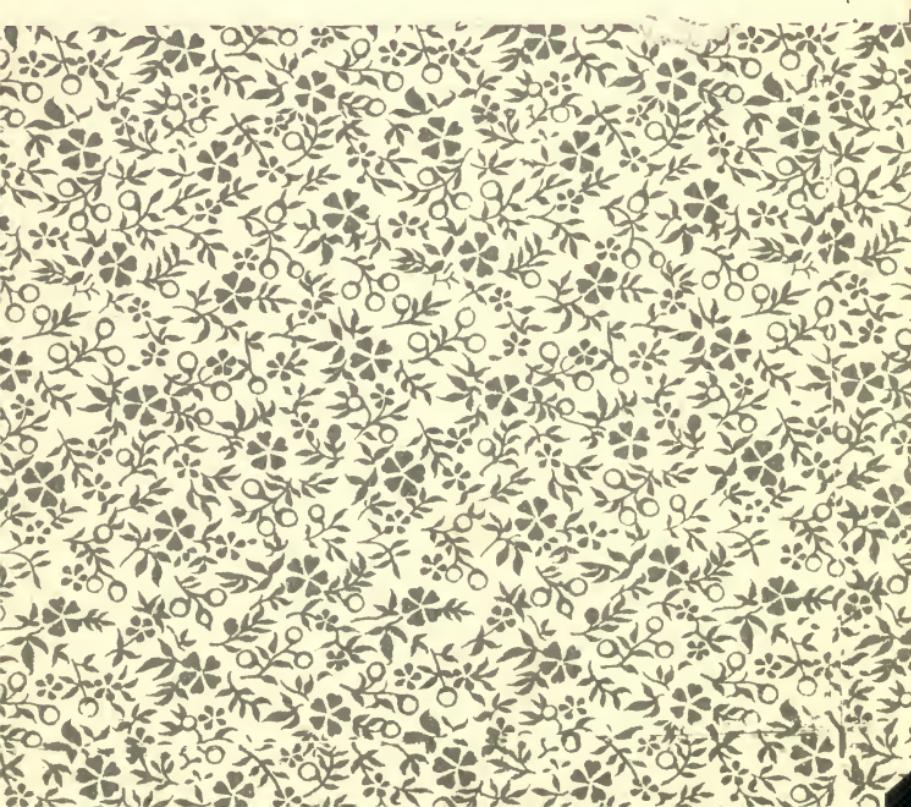


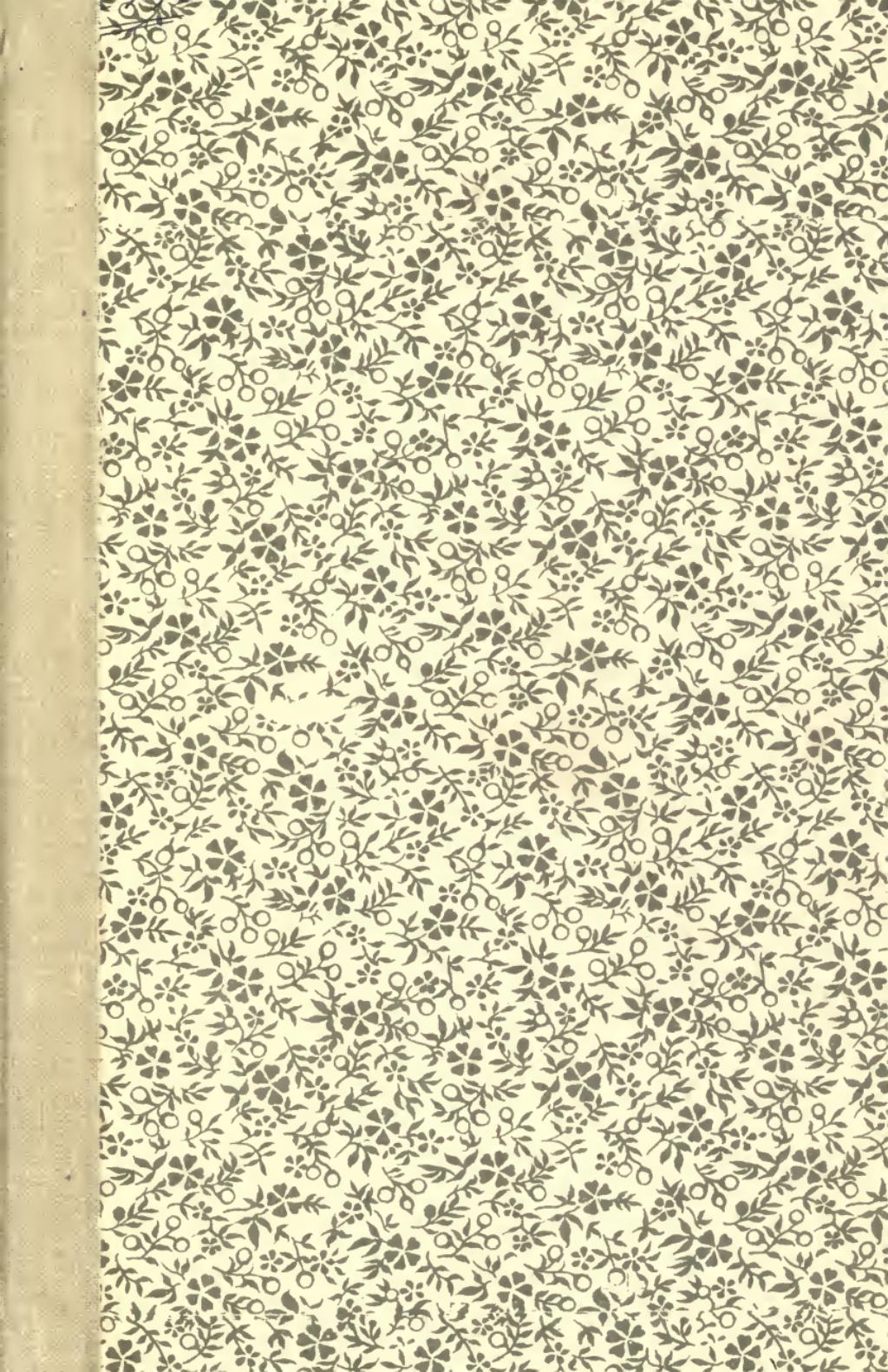
THE POE GULI
And other Poe Papers

By EUGENE L. DIDIER



LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA.

Class







Edgar A Poe

THE POE CULT and OTHER POE PAPERS

With a New Memoir

By

EUGENE L. DIDIER



Broadway Publishing Company
835 Broadway, New York

Copyright, 1909,

BY

EUGENE L. DIDIER.

All Rights Reserved.

**In Memory of
my only Son,**

J. D'ARCY DIDIER,

the Pride of my Heart, and the Hope of his
Family, who Died on the 23d of August,
1907, in the Bright Promise of
Early Manhood.

PS2631
D5
1909
MAIN

NOTE BY THE AUTHOR.

The twenty-three separate articles comprised in this volume have been published in various American magazines during the last thirty-five years. In reading them over in proof, I find that some expressions, and even some statements, have been repeated. It was almost impossible to avoid such repetitions, written, as the articles were so many years apart, and for so many different magazines.

TO THE READER.

From my boyhood the writings of Edgar A. Poe have possessed a singular fascination for me. Admiration of his works led me to a close and exhaustive study of the poet's strange and romantic life. Although sixty years have elapsed since Poe's death, an amazing amount of ignorance still exists upon the subject of his life and character. It is hoped that the present volume will do something toward dispelling this ignorance, and present the author of "The Raven" to his countrymen, and the world, in some of the most interesting phases of his remarkable career.

For a quarter of a century after Poe's death, his name and fame were under a cloud. But during the present generation a great and wonderful change has taken place—

*"Through many a year his fame has grown,—
Like midnight vast, like starlight sweet,—
Till now his genius fills a throne,
And nations marvel at his feet."*

EUGENE L. DIDIER.

Baltimore, Md.

CONTENTS.

<i>Memoir of Edgar A. Poe</i>	7
<i>The Poe Cult</i>	75
<i>Poe: Real and Reputed</i>	87
<i>The Boyhood of Edgar A. Poe</i>	96
<i>Poe's Female Friends</i>	102
<i>Poe and Mrs. Whitman</i>	117
<i>The Loves of Edgar A. Poe</i>	123
<i>Poe and Stoddard</i>	135
<i>Ingram's Life of Poe</i>	140
<i>Woodberry's Life of Poe</i>	145
<i>Recent Biographies of Edgar A. Poe</i>	150
<i>The True Story of Poe's Death</i>	175
<i>The Grave of Poe</i>	180
<i>The Poe Monument</i>	184
<i>Portraits of Poe</i>	191
<i>The Poe Mania</i>	203
<i>The Semi-Centennial of America's Greatest Poet</i>	207
<i>The Truth about Edgar A. Poe</i>	216
<i>Poe in Society</i>	241
<i>Recollections of Poe by the Witnesses of His Life</i>	252
<i>Poe as Seen by Stoddard, Stedman, and Harrison</i>	261
<i>The "Discoverer" of Poe</i>	272
<i>Poe and the University of Virginia</i>	277
<i>The Centennial of the Birth of Edgar A. Poe</i>	284

ILLUSTRATIONS

	<i>Frontispiece</i>	PAGE
Edgar A. Poe	<i>Frontispiece</i>	
Elizabeth Poe	8	
Maria Clemm	11	
Geo. R. Graham (Editor Graham's Magazine)	33	
Washington Coll. Univ. Hospital	45	
Sarah Helen Whitman	74	
Poe Monument, Baltimore	117	
Marie Louise Shew	184	
	273	



The Poe Cult

MEMOIR OF EDGAR A. POE.

The year of Edgar A. Poe's birth—1809—was an *annus mirabilis* in literary history. In that year were born Alfred Tennyson, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Edward Fitzgerald, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Charles Darwin, William E. Gladstone, besides the subject of this Memoir. Among these illustrious names, Edgar A. Poe was the first in point of time, and, in the estimation of many, the first in genius. For three score years and more the time and place of his birth were unknown. His early biographers gave 1811 as the time, and Baltimore as the place of his birth. In order to ascertain the truth about the matter, I consulted Mrs. Maria Clemm, the poet's aunt and mother-in-law, who told me that he was born in Boston, on the 19th of January, 1809.

Although more than a dozen lives of Poe have been written, there is an amazing amount of ignorance upon the subject. This ignorance is not confined to the "average reader," but I have known college professors—professors of English in reputable colleges—so grossly ignorant of the facts of Poe's life that they did

The Poe Cult

not know when and where some of his most remarkable tales were written; and who accepted with childish credulity the malicious and mendacious stories told of him by his enemies.

David Poe, Junior, the father of the poet, was the eldest son of General David Poe, of Baltimore. As the younger Poe grew to manhood, he displayed a fondness for amateur acting, and, with some other youths, formed a Thespian Club which met in an attic room of his father's house. David Poe was a law student, but so great was his passion for the stage, that, in 1804, he threw aside his law books, and joined a troupe of strolling players. C. D. Hopkins, the light comedian of the company, died in 1805, and, in a few months, Poe married his widow, whose maiden name was Elizabeth Arnold. She was of English birth—pretty, clever, sprightly, vivacious, and a great favorite on the stage. After their marriage they continued their wandering theatrical life, traveling up and down the Atlantic Coast from Boston to Charleston. When they died—Mrs. Poe on December 8, 1811, in Richmond, her husband, in Norfolk, a few weeks previously—they left three helpless children—the eldest, William Henry Leonard, was adopted by his grandfather, General Poe; Edgar was adopted by Mr. and Mrs. John Allan, of Richmond, and

The Poe Cult

Rosalie, by Mr. and Mrs. Mackenzie, of the same city. The future poet was early taught to read, write, draw, and recite verses. On the 17th of June, 1815, Mr. and Mrs. Allan sailed for London, taken their adopted son with them. They remained abroad five years, during which time Edgar was a pupil of Dr. Bransby's Manor House School, at Stoke-Newington, near London. This school and its surroundings made a lasting impression upon the receptive mind of the young student, and he described it with minute accuracy in "William Wilson," one of his most striking and original tales.

When the Allans returned to Richmond, in 1820, Edgar became successively a pupil of the schools of Joseph H. Clarke and William Burke. He stood high in all his classes, and was a great favorite of his teachers and fellow students. Professor Clarke told me that Edgar wrote genuine poetry even in those early days; he was a born poet; his poetical compositions were universally admitted to be the best in the school, while the other boys wrote mere mechanical verses. As a scholar, he was ambitious and always acquitted himself well in his studies. During the three years he was at Professor Clarke's school, he read the principal Latin and Greek authors; but he had no

love for mathematics. He had a sensitive and tender heart, and would do anything to serve a friend. His nature was entirely free from selfishness, the predominant defect of boyhood. At the end of the scholastic year, in the summer of 1823, Professor Clarke removed from Richmond, upon which occasion Poe addressed a poetical tribute to him.

William Burke took Professor Clarke's school and most of his pupils; among them Edgar Poe. Several years ago Andrew Johnston, of Richmond, furnished me with the following particulars:

"I entered Mr. Burke's school on the first of October, 1823, and found Edgar A. Poe already there. I knew him before, but not well, there being two, if not three, years difference in our ages. He attended the school all through 1824, and part of 1825. Some time in the latter year he left. He was a much more advanced scholar than any of us; but there was no other class for him—that being the highest—and he had nothing to do, or but little, to keep at the head of the school. I dare say he liked it very well, for he was fond of general reading, and even then he wrote verses very clever for a boy of his age, and sometimes satirical. We all recognized and admired his great and varied talents, and were proud of

The Poe Cult

him as the most distinguished schoolboy in Richmond.

"At that time Poe was slight in person, but well-made, active, sinewy, and graceful. In athletic exercises he was foremost: especially, he was the best, the most daring, and most enduring swimmer that I ever saw in the water. When about sixteen years old, he performed his well-known feat of swimming from Richmond to Warwick, a distance of five or six miles. He was accompanied by two boats, and it took him several hours to accomplish the task, the tide changing during the time.

"Poe was always neat in his dress, but not foppish. His disposition was amiable, and his manners pleasant and courteous."

After leaving Burke's school in March, 1825, Mr. Allan placed Edgar under the best private tutors in order to prepare him for the University of Virginia. He devoted himself to the classics, modern languages, and *belles-lettres*. Richmond at that time, as now, was celebrated for its polished society. Into this society Edgar Poe was early welcome—a boy in years, but a man in mind and manners. The refined grace and courtesy toward women that ever distinguished him may have been then acquired in the best society of Virginia's beautiful capital.

The Poe Cult

On the 14th of February, 1826, Poe entered the University of Virginia. The studies which he selected were ancient and modern languages, and he attended lectures in Latin, Greek, French, Spanish, and Italian. He read and wrote Latin and French with ease and accurately, and, at the close of the session, was mentioned as excellent in those languages. His literary tastes were marked while at the University, and among the professors he was regarded as well behaved and studious. At the end of the session, December 15, 1826, he graduated in Latin and French, and returned to Richmond. Soon after his return, Mr. Allan placed him in his counting room, but the future poet could not brook the dull life of a clerk, and, in a few weeks, took French leave. Now commenced that restless, wandering life which continued until the end. In the Spring of 1827, he found himself in Boston, his native city, where his mother had made many friends before his birth. Here the first edition of his "Tamerlane and Other Poems," was printed—forty copies. This tiny volume of less than forty pages has become one of the rarest books in the world, only three or four copies are known to be in existence, and has sold as high as \$2,550.

Having no money, and no prospect of mak-

The Poe Cult

ing any, on May 26, 1827, he enlisted as a private soldier in the United States Army, under the name of Edgar A. Perry, and was assigned to Battery H of the 1st artillery. After a short service in Boston his battery was ordered to Fort Moultrie, near Charleston, S. C. It was while stationed there that the story of a buried treasure was suggested to him, which was afterward made the subject of one of his most remarkable tales—"The Gold Bug." By 1829 he was at Fortress Monroe, his good conduct and strict attention to his duties having earned his promotion to the rank of sergeant-major. The officers under whom he served soon discovered that he was far superior in education to his position, and he was employed as company clerk and assistant in the Commissary Department. The discovery of Poe's army record, taken from the Records of the War Department at Washington, disproves at once and forever the romantic story that he went to Europe after leaving the University of Virginia for the purpose of engaging in the struggle for Grecian independence, to which the death of Byron had attracted the attention of the world.

On February 28, 1829, his kind, indulgent X mother, by adoption, Mrs. Allan, died. Her death was a great misfortune to Poe, as she

The Poe Cult

had always stood between him and her stern, relentless husband. On April 15, 1829, having secured a substitute, our sergeant-major was honorably discharged from the army, and paid a visit to Baltimore, probably in order to look up his relatives there. His second book, "Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane, and Minor Poems," was published in Baltimore in 1829—a thin volume of seventy-one pages. A copy of this edition, enriched with notes by the author, has advanced in price from \$75, in 1892, to \$1,825, in 1903.

Mr. Allan, wishing to place his wayward ward where he could earn a living, and, at the same time, be free from all future responsibility, obtained his appointment to West Point. He entered the academy on July 1, 1830, perhaps the most brilliant and gifted cadet that ever went there. He was in the flower of youth, and in the first bloom of that remarkable beauty of face and form which distinguished him through life. His rich, dark hair fell in abundant clusters over his high, white, magnificent forehead, beneath which shone the most beautiful, the most expressive of mortal eyes. He was of medium height, but elegantly formed, his bearing being proud, lofty, and fearless.

The Poe Cult

Poe stood high in his classes, especially in French and mathematics—his great fault was his neglect of, and apparent contempt for, his military duties: His capricious temper made him, at times, utterly oblivious or indifferent to the ordinary routine of roll-calls, drills, and guard duty. These were all and each utterly distasteful to the young poet, whose soul was filled with a burning ambition. He turned with delight from military tactics to the classic pages of Virgil; he neglected mathematics for the fascinating essays of Macaulay, which were just then beginning to charm the world; he escaped from the evening parade to wander along the beautiful banks of the Hudson, meditating his tuneful “Israfel,” and, perhaps, planning “Ligeia,” or, “The Fall of the House of Usher.”

These irregular habits subjected the cadet to frequent arrests and punishments, and effectually prevented his learning to discharge the duties of a soldier. Before Poe had been at West Point six months, he found the rigid discipline so intolerable that he asked permission of Mr. Allan to resign. This was peremptorily refused. The reason was obvious: within a year after the death of his first wife, Mr. Allan married Louise Gabrielle Patterson, of New Jersey, and, a son being born, Edgar Poe

X

The Poe Cult

was no longer the heir to his princely fortune, and he wished to keep his ward in an honorable profession which would give him a support for life. Hence he refused to allow him to leave West Point—consent of father or guardian being required before a cadet could resign. But Poe was determined to get away from the academy, with or without Mr. Allan's consent. So he commenced a regular and deliberate neglect of duties and disobedience of rules: he cut his classes, shirked the drill, and refused to do guard duty. The desired result followed: on January 7th, 1831, cadet Edgar A. Poe was brought before a general court-marshal, charged with "gross neglect of all duty, and disobedience of orders." The accused promptly pleaded "guilty" to all the specifications, and, to his great delight, was sentenced "to be dismissed from the service of the United States."

About the time that Poe was dismissed from West Point, he published a third volume, entitled "Poems, by Edgar A. Poe." The volume contained "Al Aaraef," and "Tamerlane," from the edition of 1829, omitting all the others, but adding the exquisite lines "To Helen," which has won the admiration of all readers; the tuneful "Israfel," "Irene" (afterward remodeled into "The Sleeper"), and four

The Poe Cult

smaller poems. The book was dedicated to the United States Corps of Cadets, an honor which the cadets did not deserve, for they declared the verses "ridiculous doggerel."

When Poe was dismissed from West Point, he was in the situation of Adam when he was expelled from the Garden of Eden—the world was all before where to choose. He was homeless, penniless, friendless. He had been taught to spend thousands, but had never been taught to earn a dollar. In this emergency he made his way to Richmond, and presented himself at the home of his youth—the only home he had ever known—the Allan mansion on the corner of Fifth and Main Streets. His reception was not that of the Prodigal Son when he returned to his father's house: no fatted calf was killed—no friends were invited to meet him—no feast was spread to welcome the wanderer home. He was coldly received, where he had once been the idolized child of the house. We all know the influence of a young wife upon a fond, doting old husband. The second Mrs. Allan looked with disfavor upon Poe's presence in the house, and when he appeared, he was told that his former room, which was always kept ready for him by the first Mrs. Allan, was now a guest chamber, and he was as-

X

signed to a small room at the back of the house, which had been occupied by Mrs. Allan's maid. The proud and high-spirited young man keenly felt this indignity, and, refusing to allow his satchel to be carried to the room, determined to see Mrs. Allan. A stormy interview followed, and Poe left the house forever. A letter written to me by a Richmond lady, who claimed to be "a confidant of Mr. Poe's," says the cause of the quarrel between Poe and Allan "was very simple and very natural under the circumstances, and completely exonerates Poe from ingratitude to his adopted father." Whatever was the cause, the result was that Poe left the house as already mentioned. Writing many years afterward to one who possessed his entire confidence, Mrs. Sarah Helen Whitman, he used this passionate language:

“By the God who reigns in heaven, I swear to you that I am incapable of dishonor. I can call to mind no act of my life which would bring a blush to my cheek or to yours. If I have erred at all, in this regard, it has been on the side of what the world would call a Quixotic sense of the honorable—of the chivalrous. The indulgence of this sense has been the true voluptuousness of my life. It was for this species of luxury that in early youth I

The Poe Cult

deliberately threw away from me a large fortune, rather than endure a trivial wrong."

After the affair with Mrs. Allan, just mentioned, Poe probably went to Baltimore, and resided with his aunt, Mrs. Maria Clemm. For the next two years all trace of him is lost, excepting a letter which he wrote on May 6th, 1831, in which he asked William Gwynn, a Baltimore editor, for employment in his office. Not meeting with any encouragement, he next applied to Dr. N. C. Brooks for a position in the school which he had recently established at Riestertown, in Baltimore County. Fifty-eight years afterward, Dr. Brooks told me of this, and said he regretted at the time there was no vacancy, as he knew that Poe was an accomplished scholar.

During those two years Poe was not idle, for, when the Baltimore *Saturday Visitor*, in the summer of 1833, offered one hundred dollars for the best prose story, and fifty dollars for the best poem, he submitted his "Tales of the Folio Club," comprising "A Manuscript Found in a Bottle," "A Descent into the Maelstrom," "Adventures of Hans Pfaall," "Berenice," "Lionizing," "A Tale of the Ragged Mountain," etc. He also sent in for competition a poem, "The Coliseum." Both prizes were awarded to Poe by the committee,

X

The Poe Cult

but, as it was not deemed expedient by the proprietor of the *Saturday Visitor* to bestow both prizes upon the same person, he was awarded the hundred-dollar prize for "A Manuscript Found in a Bottle," and an unknown local genius was given the fifty dollars for the best poem, which was no poem at all.

The hundred-dollar prize was the first money that Poe ever received from literary work, and, from that time until his death, he never earned a dollar except by his pen. He was at that time twenty-four years old, unconscious that there was before him sixteen years of suffering and sorrow, of heroic struggle, of splendid achievement, and immortal fame!

In winning the hundred-dollar prize, Poe won, at the same time, a good and true friend in John P. Kennedy, who was one of the three gentlemen who composed the committee of award. Every admirer of Poe should appreciate Mr. Kennedy's kindness to the young poet. He alone, of the committee, extended a helping hand to the unknown but ambitious young author. He invited him to his house, made him welcome at his table, and furnished him with a saddle horse, that he might take exercise whenever he pleased. He did more: he introduced him to Thomas W. White, proprietor of the *Southern Literary Messenger*,

The Poe Cult

then recently started in Richmond, and recommended him as being "very clever with his pen, classical, and scholar-like." Mr. White invited Poe to send him a contribution, and, in the March number, 1835, his strangely beautiful tale, "Berenice," was published in the *Messenger*, and attracted immediate attention. From that time, for two years, Poe was a regular contributor to that magazine, and was rapidly making his name and that of the *Messenger* known through the country.

Malice and ignorance have caused Poe to be charged with pride and ingratitude. That these vices were foreign to his nature, we have abundant evidence, all through his life. Here are two examples which occurred at the period about which we are now writing: He visited each of the gentlemen who awarded him the prize, and thanked them for their approval of his literary work. Again, in order to show Poe's gratitude to Mr. Kennedy, I quote two passages from a letter written to Mr. White, dated Baltimore, May 30, 1835. He had written a criticism of Kennedy's once famous historical novel, "Horse-Shoe Robinson," and apologizing for the hasty sketch he sent, instead of the thorough review which he intended, says, "At the time I was so ill as to be hardly able to see the paper on which I wrote,

The Poe Cult

and I finished it in a state of complete exhaustion. I have not, therefore, done anything like justice to the book, and I am vexed about the matter, for Mr. Kennedy proved himself a true friend to me in every respect, and *I am sincerely grateful to him for many acts of generosity and attention.*" In that same letter, in answer to Mr. White's query, whether he was satisfied with the pay he was receiving for his work on the *Messenger*, Poe wrote: "I reply that I am, entirely. *My poor services are not worth what you give me for them.*"

For two or three years, Edgar Poe had been engaged in the most delightful of occupations —the instruction of a young girl, singularly beautiful, interesting, and truly loved. For two or three years Virginia—his starry-eyed young cousin—had been his pupil. Never had teacher so lovely a pupil, never a pupil so tender a teacher. They were both young; she was a child—

"But our love it was stronger by far than the love
Of those who were older than we."

Under the name of Eleonora, Edgar tells the story of their love: "The loveliness of Eleonora was that of the seraphim, and she was a maiden artless and innocent as the brief life she had led among the flowers—*I, and my cousin, and her mother.*"

The Poe Cult

Mr. White soon saw how valuable to his magazine were the contributions of Edgar Poe, and in the summer of 1835 he offered him the position of assistant editor of the *Messenger*, at a salary of ten dollars a week. He gladly accepted this offer, and prepared to remove to Richmond immediately, and his letters show that, on the 20th of August, 1835, he was in that city.

In spite of his rising fortune and increasing fame, he felt most keenly the separation from "her he loved so dearly." For years Virginia X had been his daily companion and confidante. Like Abelard and Heloise, they had but one home and one heart. In the first days of this separation he wrote his friend, Mr. Kennedy, a letter, dated Richmond, September 11, 1835, in which, after expressing a deep sense of his gratitude for his frequent kindness and assistance, he says: "I am suffering under a depression of spirits such as I never felt before. I have struggled in vain against the influence of this melancholy; you will believe me when I say that I am still miserable, in spite of the great improvement in my circumstances. Write me immediately; convince me that it is worth one's while—that it is at all necessary—to live, and you will prove indeed my friend. Persuade me to do what is right.

The Poe Cult

I do, indeed, mean this. Write me, then, and quickly. *Your* words will have more weight with me than the words of others, for *you were my friend when no one else was.*"

So great satisfaction did Poe give by his work as assistant editor of the *Messenger*, that, in December, 1835, White made him the editor of the magazine, and increased his salary to \$800 a year.

As his pecuniary prospects brightened, his first thought was to bring his aunt and cousin to Richmond, where, in May, 1836, Edgar and Virginia were married.

During the nineteen months that Poe was with the *Messenger*, the circulation of the magazine increased from 700 to 5,000. This remarkable increase of circulation was chiefly due to Poe's brilliant contributions, which attracted the attention of the whole country. Between December, 1835, and September, 1836, he wrote ninety-four reviews, more or less elaborate, but all striking. Even at that early period of his literary life, he showed that artistic finish of style which distinguished his whole career, and that power of analysis and abhorrence of careless writing which was always one of his marked characteristics. These early critiques were not by any means condemnatory. In fact, only three of the whole

The Poe Cult

ninety-four were decidedly harsh. No American critic had a more sincere appreciation of literary excellence than Poe, and he showed it in his criticism. George Parsons Lathrop, whose worship of Hawthorne was inspired by his love of Hawthorne's lovely daughter, Rose, was unjust and unappreciative of Poe, but he was forced to admit that, "we owe to Poe the first agile and determined movement of criticism in this country, and, although it was a startling dexterity which winged his censorial shafts, he was excellently fitted for the critic's office in one way, because he knew positively of what standards he meant to judge by, and kept up an inflexible hostility to any offense against them. He had an acute instinct in matters of literary form; it amounted, indeed, to a passion, as all his instincts and perceptions did; he had, also, the knack of finding reasons for his opinions, and of stating them well. All this is essential to the equipment of the critic."

An estimate of Poe as a poet by the same unfriendly critic is worth preserving: "As a mere potency, Poe must be rated almost highest among American poets; and high among prosaists; no one else offers so much pungency, such impetuous and frightful energy crowded into such small space. . . . Let us call Poe a positive genius. He would have flourished

The Poe Cult

anywhere in much the same way as he did in America."

Hawthorne said: "I do not want to be a doctor and live by men's diseases, nor a minister and live by their sins, nor a lawyer and live by their quarrels. So, I do not know that there is anything for me but to be an author." His relatives urged him to go into business, his genius forbade it. He was made to feel that he was a useless dreamer, and this drove him in upon himself; but he persisted. Poe must have felt the same way, saying, "I do not want to be a soldier and kill men, and I won't; I will be an author;" and he was. Hawthorne was the natural result of the grim, gloomy, stern Puritan spirit, but Poe had no literary ancestors: he stands alone as a strange, unique, mysterious, fascinating figure in the literature of the world, representing no country, no race, no time. His genius was alien to American soil. He stands alone among American poets as Shakespeare stands alone among the poets of the world. He had no predecessor; he has had no successors. His appearance in the literary world was as sudden and unexpected as it was strange and wonderful. His original and distinct genius astonished the world like a new, brilliant planet suddenly appearing in the heavens.

The Poe Cult

Poe's message to the world was that man does not live by bread alone—that there is a higher, nobler, grander ideal to be realized than money-getting, commercialism, materialism. Poe's genius was a revelation to the world—his extraordinary gifts elevated him far above all his contemporaries, and placed him as a star, apart. His own countrymen were not ready to receive him when he came, and he suffered accordingly. One poet like Poe is worth more to the world than a hundred Rockefellers, Vanderbilts, Goulds, Carnegies, and Harrimans. Such men are the natural product of American life, but Almighty God alone can produce a poet of inspired genius. Poe had the culture that sometimes is lacking in genius; he had the refinement which is sometimes wanting in great minds. It is not the millionaire, but the poet, that makes life worth living. The millionaire is really a blot upon American civilization; the poet gives life a tone and a color. It has been said that the memories of kings and conquerors flit like troubled ghosts through the pages of history; but it is only the name of the thinker of great thoughts, the poet of rare gifts that foreign nations and after generations cherish. Like Bacon, Poe might have left his "name to the next ages and to foreign nations." For

The Poe Cult

his fame has grown steadily since his tragical death, not only in his own land, but among “foreign nations.”

It should be mentioned that Poe was only twenty-six years old when he was made editor of the *Southern Literary Messenger*, and that, in less than two years, he gave it a commanding position among American magazines. Perhaps no similar enterprise ever prospered so largely in its commencement, and none in the same length of time—not even *Blackwood*, in the brilliant days of Maginn, ever published so many dazzling articles from the same pen. Strange stories of the German school, akin to the most fanciful legends of the Rhine, fascinating and astonishing the reader with the verisimilitude of their improbability, appeared in the same number with lyrics plaintive and wondrous sweet, the earliest vibrations of those chords which have since sounded through the world.

X

In January, 1837, the blood of the wanderer, which he derived from his actress-mother, drove him from Richmond to New York, in which city Mrs. Clemm started a boarding house on Carmine Street. One of the few boarders was William Gowans, the eminent second-hand bookseller, who has left

The Poe Cult

an interesting account of Poe at that time: "For eight months or more 'one house contained us, as one table fed.' During that time I saw much of Edgar A. Poe, and had an opportunity of conversing with him often, and, I must say that, I never saw him the least affected with liquor, nor even descend to any vice, while he was one of the most courteous, gentlemanly, and intelligent companions I have met with during my journeyings and haltings through divers divisions of the globe; beside, he had an extra inducement to be a good man as well as a good husband, for he had a wife of matchless beauty and loveliness; her eye could match that of any houri, and her face defy the genius of a Canova to imitate; a temper and a disposition of surpassing sweetness; besides, she seemed as much devoted to him and his every interest as a young mother to her first-born. Poe had a remarkably pleasing and prepossessing countenance, what the ladies would call decidedly handsome."

X

Poe's object in removing to New York, at this time, was because he thought that city offered greater advantages to a professional man of letters than the provincial town of Richmond. He was promised a position on the *New York Review*, but that periodical was already in the throes of dissolution, and did not

long survive the financial panic of 1837. Poe's only contribution to it was an elaborate review of Stephens' "Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia, Petraea, and the Holy Land."

In the number of the *Southern Literary Messenger* which announced Poe's retirement, Mr. White promised that he would "continue to furnish its columns from time to time with the effusions of his vigorous and powerful pen." In the January number of the *Messenger*, 1837, which was the last under Poe's editorship, appeared the first installment of "The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym," which was continued in the February number, and afterward published in book form in New York and London. As usual with Poe's works, it attracted more attention abroad than at home. It should be mentioned that he never relinquished his early interest in the *Messenger*, but wrote for it as long as he lived. As some of his earliest, so some of his latest, writings first appeared in that magazine.

Poe's first residence in New York lasted from the winter of 1837 to the summer of 1838, when he removed to Philadelphia. Soon after his arrival in the Quaker City, he was asked by his old friend, Dr. N. C. Brooks, to write the leading article for the first number of *The American Museum*, a monthly maga-

The Poe Cult

zine about to be started in Baltimore, and destined to add to the collection of dead magazines for which that city enjoys an unenviable reputation; in fact, while many magazines have been born and died in the Monumental City, it can boast of no living monthly, although it boasts of a population of 600,000 inhabitants.

Dr. Brooks suggested that Poe should write an article on Washington Irving. In answer to this request, Poe wrote a letter which Professor Harrison credits to an Englishman who claims to have "discovered" Poe, but he did not "discover" this letter, for I saw the original, in 1873, and printed it in my first "Life of Poe," which was published in 1876, although the book was dated for the next year. From my work, the Englishman copied the letter into his Memoir, which was not published until 1880. Poe did not write the article on Washington Irving for Dr. Brooks, but the first number of the *American Museum* contained "Ligeia," which its author regarded as his best story, because it displays the highest range of imagination. In this same magazine he published his clever satirical sketch, "The Signora Psyche Zenobia," "Literary Small Talk," and the dainty, airy, exquisite "Haunted Palace." A Northern critic, who is not over-

The Poe Cult

favorable to Poe, pronounces "Ligeia" a story "as faultless as humanity can fashion."

Poe had several homes during the six years that he lived in Philadelphia—from 1838 to 1844—but he resided for the longest time at Spring Garden, then a suburb of the city. It was there that Captain Mayne Reid visited him, and wrote a most delightful description of his home and family. The house was small, but furnished with much taste; flowers bloomed around the porch, and the singing of birds was heard. It was, indeed, the very home for a poet. "In this humble domicile," says Mayne Reid, "I have spent some of the pleasantest hours of my life—certainly, some of the most intellectual. They were passed in the company of the poet and his wife—a lady angelically beautiful in person, and not less beautiful in spirit. No one who remembers the dark-haired, dark-eyed daughter of the South—her face so exquisitely lovely—her gentle, graceful demeanor—no one who has been an hour in her society, but will indorse what I have said of this lady, who was the most delicate realization of the poet's rarest ideal. But the bloom upon her cheek was too pure, too bright for earth. It was consumption's color—that sadly beautiful light that beckons to an early grave.

"With the poet and his wife there lived an-





MARIA CLEMM.

From her last photograph from life, 1868; aged seventy-eight years.

The Poe Cult

other person—Mrs. Clemm. She was the mother of Mrs. Poe, and one of those proud Southern women who have inspired the song and chivalry of their beautiful land. Mrs. Clemm was the ever-vigilant guardian of the house, watching over the comfort of her two children, keeping everything neat and clean, so as to please the fastidious eyes of the poet—going to market, and bringing home little delicacies that their limited means would allow; going to editors with a poem, a critique, or a story, and often returning without the much-needed money."

This is a very pleasing glimpse at the home life of our poet, and all the more valuable, coming as it does, spontaneously from a foreigner. Such scenes show more truly a man's real character than volumes of human analysis. I shall close this personal description of the poet with some particulars which Mrs. Clemm furnished me toward the close of her life, and which I took down in shorthand at the time: "Eddie had no idea of the value of money. I had to attend to all his pecuniary affairs. I even bought his clothes for him; he never bought a pair of gloves or a cravat for himself; he was very charitable, and would empty his pockets to a beggar. He loved Virginia with a tenderness and a devotion which

The Poe Cult

no words can express, and he was the most affectionate of sons to me."

Not long after Poe's removal to Philadelphia, he was engaged as a contributor for *The Gentleman's Magazine*, which was owned by William E. Burton, an English comedian, who is better remembered as an actor than as an editor and publisher. He drew immediate attention to the magazine by his powerful criticisms and strange, fascinating tales. Among the latter was "The Fall of the House of Usher," which is regarded by most readers as Poe's masterpiece in imaginative fiction; but, as already mentioned, he gave that preference to "Ligeia." It has been said that "both have the unquestionable stamp of genius. The analysis of the growth of madness in one, and the thrilling revelation of the existence of a first wife in the person of a second, in the other, are made with consummate skill; and the strange, and solemn and fascinating beauty, which informs the style, and invests the circumstances of both, drugs the mind, and makes us forget the improbabilities of their general design."

So well pleased was Burton with Poe's contributions to *The Gentleman's Magazine*, that, in May, 1839, he made him its editor. The

The Poe Cult

pay was small—ten dollars a week—a paltry salary for a man of Poe's genius and reputation. In the Autumn of 1840, Burton sold his magazine to George R. Graham, owner of *The Casket*. The two periodicals were merged into one under the name of *Graham's Magazine*, with Poe as its editor. In two years he raised the circulation from 5,000 to 50,000. In the April, 1841, number of *Graham's* appeared the extraordinary, analytical story, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," which first introduced him to French readers, and, also, made his name known to the French courts. A Paris Bohemian, having come across the story, dressed it up to suit the Parisian palate, published it in *Le Commerce*, as an original tale, under the name of "L'Orangotang." Not long afterward, another French journal, *La Quotidienne*, published a translation of the story under another name. Thereupon *Le Siecle* charged *La Quotidienne* with having stolen said feuilleton from one previously published in *Le Commerce*. This led to a war of words between the editors of *La Quotidienne* and *Le Siecle*. The quarrel became so warm that it was taken to the law courts for settlement, where the aforesaid Bohemian proved that he had stolen the story from Monsieur Edgar Poe, an American

The Poe Cult

writer. It was shown that the writer in *La Quotidienne* was himself an impudent plagiarist, for he had taken Monsieur Poe's story without a word of acknowledgment; while the editor of *Le Siecle* was forced to admit that not only had he never read any of Poe's works, but had not even heard of him. The public attention having been thus directed to Poe, his best tales were translated by Madame Isabelle Mennier, and published in several French magazines. The leading Parisian journals showered praises upon our author for the remarkable power and amazing ingenuity displayed in these tales. Many years afterward, Charles Baudelaire, having thoroughly imbued himself with the spirit of Poe's prose writings, published a translation of them in five volumes. Poe is the only American author who is known, or, at least, popular, in France; and that he is known there is due, in a great measure, to the patient industry of Baudelaire.

“The Murders in the Rue Morgue” was followed, in November, 1841, by “The Mystery of Marie Roget,” in which the scene of the murder of a cigar girl, named Mary Rogers, in the vicinity of New York, was transferred to Paris, and, by a wonderful train of analytical reasoning, the mystery that surrounded the affair was completely disentangled. These,

The Poe Cult

and a succeeding story, "The Purloined Letter," are the most ingenious tales of ratiocination in the English language, and were the foundation of the modern detective story, so successfully carried out by Conan Doyle, the creator of "Sherlock Holmes," Robert Louis Stevenson and others, who have frankly admitted their indebtedness to Poe. It will be interesting to know that Monsieur G——, the Prefect of the Parisian police, who is mentioned in these stories, was Monsieur Grisquet, for many years Chief of the Paris Police, who died in February, 1866.

The most extraordinary of Poe's successful efforts at ratiocination was that in which he pointed out what *must* be the plot of Dickens' celebrated novel, "Barnaby Rudge," when only the beginning of the story had been published. In the *Philadelphia Saturday Evening Post* of May 1, 1841, Poe printed what he called "a prospective notice" of the novel, in which he used the following words:

"That Barnaby is the son of the murdered man may not appear evident to our readers; but we will explain: The person murdered is Mr. Reuben Haredale. His steward (Mr. Rudge, Senior), and his gardener, are missing. At first both are suspected. 'Some months afterward,' in the language of the

story, 'the steward's body, scarcely to be recognized, but by his clothes and the watch and the ring he wore, was found at the bottom of a piece of water in the grounds, with a deep gash in the breast, where he has been stabbed by a knife,' etc., etc.

"Now, be it observed, it is not the author himself who asserts that *the steward's body was found*; he has put the words in the mouth of one of his characters. His design is to make it appear in the *dénouement* that the steward, Rudge, first murdered the gardener, then went to his master's chamber, murdered *him*, was interrupted by his (Rudge's) wife, whom he seized and held by *the wrist*, to prevent her giving the alarm, that he then, after possessing himself of the booty desired, returned to the gardener's room, exchanged clothes with him, put upon the corpse his own watch and ring, and secreted it where it was afterward discovered at so late a period that the features could not be identified."

Readers who are familiar with the plot of "Barnaby Rudge," will perceive that the differences between Poe's preconceived ideas and the actual facts of the story are immaterial. Dickens expressed his admiring appreciation of Poe's analysis of "Barnaby Rudge." He would not have expressed the same apprecia-

tion of Poe's opinion of him, when reviewing the completed novel. At the time when Charles Dickens was the most popular writer in the world, Edgar Poe (who could never be made to bow his supreme intellect to any idol) boldly declared that he "failed peculiarly in pure narrative," pointing out, at the same time, several grammatical mistakes of the great Boz. He also showed that Dickens occasionally lapsed into a gross imitation of what itself is a gross imitation—the manner of Charles Lamb—a manner based in the Latin construction. He further showed that Dickens's great success as a novelist consisted in the delineation of character, and that those characters were grossly exaggerated caricatures—all of which is now admitted by judicious readers; but it required considerable courage to announce such an opinion at the time when Poe proclaimed it at the height of Dickens's popularity. When Dickens visited the United States in 1842, Poe had two long interviews with him. He made a lasting impression upon the impressible Boz, and when he made his last visit to this country in 1867-8, he called upon Mrs. Clemm, in Baltimore, and presented her with \$150.00.

Poe's restless spirit grew tired of the "endless toil" of the editorial work on *Graham's*

The Poe Cult

Magazine, and he endeavored to obtain more certain and more remunerative employment. His intimate friend and lifetime correspondent, F. W. Thomas, of Baltimore, author of "Clinton Bradshaw," "East and West," and other novels of some repute sixty or seventy years ago, had obtained a Government clerkship in one of the Departments in Washington. In 1842, Poe wrote to Thomas, expressing a wish to get a similar position, saying that he "would be glad to get almost any appointment—even a five hundred dollar clerkship—so that I have something independent of letters for a subsistence. To coin one's brain into silver, at the nod of a master, is, I am thinking, the hardest task in the world." At the conclusion of his letter, he says he hopes some day to have a "beautiful little cottage, completely buried in vines and flowers." How fortunately for the world that Edgar Poe did not secure "even a five hundred dollar clerkship!" Had he settled down to the dull routine of official life in Washington, he would probably not have written "The Raven," "Eureka," "The Literati of New York," "Ulalume," "The Bells," and other productions that form an imperishable portion of American literature.

About a year after Poe removed to Phila-

The Poe Cult

delphia, he collected his stories, including "Ligeia," "The Fall of the House of Usher," "The Ms. Found in a Bottle," "Morella," "The Assignation," and others less known, and published them, in 1840, under the title of "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque." The edition was small, and small was the notice it received from the press and the public. The publishers allowed Poe no remuneration for this first edition of his Prose Tales, and gave him only twenty copies for distribution. Two years after the book was issued, he was informed that the edition was not all sold, and that it had not paid expenses. Yet, within a few years, this same edition of these same tales has sold at a fabulous price at the book auctions in New York.

During his early residence in Philadelphia, Poe edited a work on Conchology which caused some controversy at the time, of little interest then, and of no interest now.

Although Poe's own countrymen were slow to recognize his genius, he was quick in recognizing the genius of others, and in bestowing generous praise upon all deserving contemporaries. He was the first American critic to proclaim the genius of Mrs. Browning (then Miss Barrett) to the world; and when he collected his poems into a volume, the

The Poe Cult

book was dedicated to her, as "*To the noblest of her sex, with the most enthusiastic admiration, and with the most sincere esteem.*" He was the first to introduce to American readers the then unknown poet, Tennyson, and boldly declared him to be "*The noblest poet that ever lived,*" at a time when the English critics had failed to discover the genius of the future Poet-Laureate. He discovered the morbid genius of Hawthorne, when the latter was, as he said of himself, "*the most obscure literary man in America.*" Poe's estimate of Willis, Halleck, Cooper, Simms, Longfellow, and other contemporaries, was eminently just. He placed the last the first among American poets; the position which Poe himself now holds, in the opinion of the leading scholars of England, France and Germany. It should be added that he qualified this praise of Longfellow by declaring that he was over-rated as an original poet.

Edmund Clarence Stredman, who had only a half-hearted appreciation of Poe, was honest enough to say that he "*was a critic of exceptional ability,*" and agreed with James Russell Lowell that "*his more dispassionate judgments have all been justified by time,*" and that he "*was a master in his own chosen field*" of poetry. It has been well and truly

The Poe Cult

said by an unknown writer in the *Atlantic Monthly*, of April, 1896, in an article on "The New Poe," that until "we have a critic of the History of the Intellectual Development of this Country during the 19th Century, . . . it is impossible to form any conclusions in regard to Poe that can be considered final." Charles Leonard Moore, in a carefully written article in the Chicago *Dial* of February 16, 1903, pays a just tribute to Poe's critical powers when he says: "Undoubtedly, Poe performed one of the most difficult feats of criticism. With almost unerring instinct, he separated the wheat from the chaff of his contemporary literature." In this same article, Mr. Moore declares that "Poe is the most sublime poet since Milton—a sublimity which stirs even in his most grotesque and fanciful sketch. It rears full-fronted in the concluding pages of the 'Narrative of A. Gordon Pym.' It thrills us in the many-colored chambers of 'The Mask of the Red Death.' It overwhelms us with horror in 'The Murders of the Rue Morgue.' It is sublime and awe-inspiring in 'Ligeia,' 'The Fall of the House of Usher,' in 'Ulalume,' and 'The Raven.' He reaches a climax of almost too profound thought in 'The Colloquy of Monos and Una,' 'The Power of Words,' and 'Eureka.' His sublimity ac-

The Poe Cult

counts for his fate with the American public. A true Democracy, it abhors greatness and ridicules sublimity." Mr. Moore says, further: "The total effect of his work is lofty and noble. His men are all brave and his women are pure. He is the least vulgar of mortals. In every land which boasts of literary culture, or civil enlightenment, Poe's poems and tales are read, and he is regarded as a distinctive genius."

The first four years of Poe's residence in Philadelphia—1838-42—were the most productive of his literary life. These four years show the most extraordinary amount of first-class literary work that has even been accomplished in this country in the same space of time. Unfortunately, the author of all of this fine, artistic work received only a pittance as his pecuniary reward. All this time he was poor—desperately poor—and in the last of these four years of surpassing achievements, a great affliction came upon him—his wife—his idolized Virginia—broke a blood-vessel in singing. From that hour until her death, five years afterwards, the delicate condition of his wife's health was a constant source of care and anxiety to the devoted husband. While struggling against poverty, and in the midst of the most disheartening surroundings, his







Geo. H. Graham

EDITOR OF GRAHAM'S MAGAZINE

The Poe Cult

wonderful imagination filled his soul with dreams of princely palaces and royal gardens, in which lived and moved forms of more than earthly beauty.

Friends and foes alike agree in testifying to Poe's tender devotion to his darling wife, "in sickness and in health." The most unrelenting of his enemies mentions having been sent for to visit him "during a period of illness, caused by protracted and anxious watching at the side of his sick wife." George R. Graham, in a generous defense of the dead poet, said, "I shall never forget how solicitous of the happiness of his wife and mother-in-law he was, whilst editor of *Graham's Magazine*. His whole efforts seemed to be to procure the comfort and welfare of his home. . . . His love for his wife was a sort of rapturous worship of the spirit of beauty which he felt was fading before his eyes. I have seen him hovering over her, when she was ill, with all the fond fear and tender anxiety of a mother for her first-born; her slightest cough causing in him a shudder, a heart-chill that was visible. I rode out one summer evening with them, and remembrance of his watchful eyes, eagerly bent upon the slightest change of hue in that loved face, haunts me yet as the memory of a sad strain. It was this hourly anticipation of

The Poe Cult

her loss that made him a sad and thoughtful man, and lent an undying melody to his undying song."

In the spring of 1842, Poe retired from *Graham's Magazine*. His reputation as the most brilliant editor in America; his fame as a poet and as a writer of purely imaginative tales, and his success in making *Graham's Magazine* the most profitable in the United States, made him feel the very natural ambition of having a magazine of his own—a magazine in which he would be perfectly untrammelled, entirely free from the control of timid publishers. With this object, he issued the prospectus of a magazine to be called *The Stylus*. Contributors and illustrators were engaged; the day was fixed for the appearance of the first number; everything was ready but the most important thing of all—the money to publish it. So the enterprise was temporarily abandoned, to be taken up again and again until the close of Poe's life.

In 1843 he won the hundred dollar prize offered by the *Dollar Magazine*, of Philadelphia, for the best short story. It was one of his most popular tales, "The Gold Bug," which gained this prize. It is founded on the discovery of the supposed buried treasure of Captain Kyd. The story displays a remarkable

The Poe Cult

illustration of Poe's theory that human ingenuity can construct no enigma which the human mind, by proper application, cannot solve. The chief interest centres on the solution of an abstruse cryptogram.

This one hundred dollar prize came when Poe was much in need of money, for after leaving *Graham's Magazine*, he was without any regular work during the rest of his stay in Philadelphia. He wrote for James Russell Lowell's short-lived magazine, *The Pioneer*, and some notable reviews for *Graham's Magazine*. After the issue of three numbers, *The Pioneer* was discontinued, and Lowell was very much distressed because he could not pay his contributors, among them Poe, who, although wanting the money, wrote to the unfortunate editor: "As for the few dollars you owe me (\$35.00), give yourself not one moment's concern about them. I am poor, but must be much poorer, indeed, when I even think of demanding them." Lowell requited Poe's generosity very ungratefully, when, in *A Fable for the Critics*, he thus characterized his former friend:

"There comes Poe with his Raven, like Barnaby Rudge
Three-fifth of him genius and two-fifth sheer fudge—

* * * *

The Poe Cult

Who has written some things quite the best of their kind,
But the heart somehow seems all squeezed out by the mind."

Poe showed a great deal of "heart" when he refused to ask Lowell for money due him for his contributions to *The Pioneer*. In return for Lowell's base ingratitude, Poe denounced him as "one of the most rabid of the Abolition fanatics—a fanatic simply for the sake of fanaticism."

In April, 1844, Poe again removed to New York, hoping to find a better field for his literary work than Philadelphia had proved since he retired from *Graham's Magazine*. On Saturday, April 13, within a week after his arrival in New York, the *Sun*, of that city, published his famous "Balloon Hoax." In this extraordinary narrative, Poe anticipated the wonderful achievements of the twentieth century in crossing the Atlantic. It created an immense sensation at the time. In the same month, "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains" was published in *Godey's Lady's Book*, and, in June, his poem, "Dreamland," in *Graham's Magazine*.

In the spring of 1844, Poe resumed his correspondence with James Russell Lowell. From

The Poe Cult

the first of these letters, dated May 24, 1844, we learn that six of his stories were in the hands of different editors waiting publication. Poe was an industrious, painstaking, fascinating writer; he was known as the author of some of the best short stories that had ever been published in an American magazine yet, after ten years of unceasing work, he could not find a ready market for his writings, and when published, he received a wretched remuneration for the highest kind of imaginative prose—compositions that have taken a front rank in the literature of the world.

In October, 1844, Poe was engaged by N. P. Willis as assistant on the *Evening Mirror*. For a small weekly salary, the greatest American writer was obliged to drudge seven hours in a corner of the *Evening Mirror* office—from nine to four—“ready to be called upon for any of the miscellaneous work of the day.” Willis furnishes the following tribute to his gifted “assistant”: “With the highest admiration for his genius, and a willingness to let it atone for more than ordinary irregularity, we were led by common report to expect a very capricious attention to his duties, and, occasionally, a scene of violence and difficulty. Time went on, however, and he was invariably punctual and industrious: With his pale,

The Poe Cult

beautiful, intellectual face, as a reminder of what genius was in him, it was impossible, of course, not to treat him with deferential courtesy, and, to our occasional request that he would not probe too deep in a criticism, or that he would erase a passage colored too deeply with his resentments against society and mankind, he readily and courteously assented —far more yielding than most men, we thought, on points so excusably sensitive. With a prospect of taking the lead in another periodical, he, at last, voluntarily gave up his employment with us, and, through all this considerable period, we had seen but one presentment of the man—a quiet, patient, industrious, and most gentlemanly person, commanding the utmost respect and good feeling by his unvarnishing deportment and ability."

The other periodical, in which he was "to take the lead," was *The Broadway Journal*, a weekly paper which had been started in New York in January, 1845. In March, of that year, Poe became associate editor and one-third owner. In July, when the paper was slowly dying, Poe became its sole editor. Looking over the volumes of the *Broadway Journal*, I was astonished to see so many highly finished articles from his pen, at the very time, too, when his adored wife was ill, almost dying, and

The Poe Cult

when he himself was in poor health, and harassed by cares and troubles of all kinds.

While Poe was still working for N. P. Willis as assistant on the *Evening Mirror*, he electrified the world by the publication of The Raven. This famous poem was originally published in *The American Review*—a New York Whig Journal of Politics, Literature, Art, and Science—in the number for February, 1845. It has been truly said that the first perusal of The Raven leaves no distinct impression upon the mind, but fascinates the reader with a strange and thrilling interest. It produces upon the mind and heart a vague impression of fate, of mystery, of hopeless sorrow. It sounds like the utterance of a full heart, poured out—not for the sake of telling its own sad story to a sympathetic ear—but because he is mastered by his emotions, and cannot help giving vent to them. It more resembles the soliloquies of Hamlet, in which he betrays his struggling thoughts and feelings, and in which he reveals the workings of his soul, stirred to its utmost depth by his terrible forebodings.

X

Dr. Henry E. Shepherd, the distinguished Southern scholar, critic, and educationalist, has furnished the most admirable study of The Raven that has ever been written. After assigning to Poe a place in that illustrious pro-

The Poe Cult

cession of classical poets, which includes Milton, Ben Johnson, Herrick, Shelley and Keats, he says of *The Raven*: "No poem in our language presents a more graceful grouping of metrical appliances and devices. The power of peculiar letters is evolved with a magnificent touch; the thrill of the liquids is a characteristic feature, not only of the refrain, but throughout the compass of the poem; their 'Linked sweetness long drawn out,' falls with a mellow cadence, revealing the poet's mastery of those mysterious harmonies which lie at the basis of human speech. The continuity of the rhythm, illustrating Milton's ideal of true musical delight, in which the sense is variously drawn out from one verse into another; the alliteration of the Norse minstrel and the Saxon bard; the graphic delineation and the sustained interest, are some of the features which place *The Raven* foremost among the creations of a poetic art in our age and clime." Dr. Shepherd, continuing his beautiful address, proceeded to show "the versatile character of Poe's genius, the consummate, as well as the conscious, art of his poetry, the graceful blending of the creative and the critical faculty—a combination perhaps the rarest that the history of literature affords—his want of a deference to prototypes or models, the chaste

The Poe Cult

and scholarly elegance of his diction, the Attic smoothness and the Celtic magic of his style Much of his work will perish only with the English language. His riper productions have received the most enthusiastic tributes from the sober and dispassionate critics of the Old World. I shall ever remember the thrill of grateful appreciation with which I read the splendid eulogium upon the genius of Poe in *The London Quarterly Review*, in which he is ranked far above his contemporaries, and pronounced one of the most consummate literary artists of our era, potentially the greatest critic that ever lived, and possessing perhaps the finest ear for rhythm that was ever formed. You are doubtless familiar with the impressions produced by *The Raven* upon the mind of Mrs. Browning, who has been called 'Shakespeare's daughter and Tennyson's sister.' It was but recently that one of the master spirits of the new poetic school has accorded to Poe the pre-eminence among American poets. Alfred Tennyson has expressed his admiration of our poet, who, with true poetic ken, was among the first to appreciate the novelty and delicacy of his method, and who, at a time when the Laureate's fame was obscured by adverse and undiscerning criticism, plainly foretold the

The Poe Cult

serene splendor of his matured greatness." The address of Dr. Shepherd was delivered upon the occasion of the unveiling of the Poe Monument in Baltimore on the 17th of November, 1875. He concluded his remarks in the following lofty language: "This graceful marble, fit emblem of our poet, is the expression—perhaps unconscious, undesigned, but none the less effective, of sympathy with this grand intellectual movement of our era. While we pay the last tributes of respect to the memory of him who alone was worthy, among American poets, to be ranked in that illustrious procession of bards around whose names is concentrated so much of the glory of the English tongue, from Chaucer to Tennyson, let us cherish the admonition to nurture and stimulate the poetry of our land, until it ascend, 'with no middle flight,' into the 'brightest heaven of invention,' and the region of the purest phantasy."

Poe's own account of the composition of The Raven is one of the strangest revelations that any author has ever given to the world; indeed, it would be incredible if told by any other person than the poet himself. Setting out with the intention of composing a poem that should suit at once the popular and the critical taste, and keeping *originality* always

The Poe Cult

in view, the work proceeded, says Poe, step by step until its completion, with the precision and rigid consequences of a mathematical problem. One of Poe's peculiar theories being that a long poem does not and cannot exist, he limited his poem to one hundred and eight lines. He next considered the impression, or effort, to be produced, and he declares that he kept steadily in view the design of rendering the work *universally* appreciable. Regarding beauty as the only legitimate province of poetry, and *sadness* as the highest manifestation of its tone, he selected the idea of a lover lamenting the death of his beautiful beloved as the grand work of the poem. He then be-thought himself of some keynote, some pivot, upon which the whole structure might turn, and decided upon the *refrain*; determining to produce continuously novel effects by the variation of the *application* of the *refrain*, the *refrain* itself remaining, for the most part, un-varied. The next thing in order was to select a word which would be in the fullest possible keeping with the melancholy tone of the poem. The word "nevermore" was the very first that presented itself. Then it was necessary to have some pretext for the repetition of the one word, "nevermore." The poet says he saw at once that it would not do to put the monot-

X

The Poe Cult

onous word into the mouth of a *human being*. Immediately, the idea arose of a *non-reasoning* creature capable of speech, and very naturally a parrot, in the first instance, suggested itself; but was superseded forthwith by a raven, as infinitely more in keeping with the intended melancholy tone.

Having then decided upon the rhythm of the poem, the next point to be considered was the mode of bringing together the lover and the raven. The poet determined to place the lover in the chamber rendered sacred by memories of her who had frequented it. The bird was next to be introduced. The night was made tempestuous, to account for the raven's seeking admission, and also for the effect of contrast with the physical serenity within the chamber. The bird was made to alight on the bust of Pallas, also, for the effect of contrast between the marble and the plumage, the bust of Pallas being chosen as most in keeping with the scholarship of the lover. The poem then proceeds, in mournful but melodious numbers, to the *dénouement*, when we are told the soul of the unhappy poet, from out the shadow of the raven, that lies floating on the floor, shall be lifted *nevermore*.



This is a mere outline of Poe's masterly

The Poe Cult

analysis of his most extraordinary poem. The world should be grateful to the poet for his "confidential disclosures" in regard to *The Raven*. With what delight would the world have welcomed Shakespeare's own account of the conception and composition of "Lear," of "Macbeth," of "Hamlet"!

Of all the writers of his time, Poe was the only one who could not have been foreseen. This of itself shows the originality of his work, and the strong, distinct individuality of his genius, which has given him a high place, not only in the literature of America, but in the literature of the world. The quantity of Poe's poetry is small, but, as has been said of it by a judicious critic, "its quality is perfect."

The *Raven* established Poe's fame as the most original, the most remarkable of American poets. *The Edinburgh Review*, in a harsh article, was forced to admit that, "The *Raven* has taken rank all over the world as the very first poem yet produced on the American Continent." The poem has been translated into most of the modern and several of the ancient languages. Stephen Mallarmé translated and published, in Paris, a superbly illustrated edition of *The Raven*, in 1876. He sent Mrs. Sarah Helen Whitman a copy of the volume, with a highly appreciative letter, from

X

The Poe Cult

which I was permitted to make the following extracts:

“Whatever is done to honor the memory of a genius the most truly sublime the world has ever seen, ought it not first to obtain your sanction? Such of Poe’s works as our great Baudelaire has left untranslated, this is to say, the poems, and many of the critical fragments, I hope to make known to France, and my first attempt (*The Raven*) is intended to attract attention to a future work, now nearly completed. . . . Fascinated with the works of Poe from my infancy, it is already a very long time since your name became associated with his in my earliest and most intimate sympathies.” In a letter addressed to one of his relatives in Baltimore, a few months after the publication of *The Raven*, Edgar Poe alludes, with just pride, to the renown which his poetical reputation had conferred upon the family name. A writer in the *Southern Literary Messenger* declared with equal truth and beauty, that on the dusky wings of *The Raven*, Edgar A. Poe will sail securely over the gulf of oblivion to the eternal shore. So much interest has this immortal poem created in the world of letters, that it has caused a literature of its own to be written.

In the winter of 1845-6, the literary repu-

The Poe Cult

tation of Edgar A. Poe had attained its greatest brilliancy. A cousin of the poet, Judge Neilson Poe, of Baltimore, told me that he visited him during that time, and Edgar, Virginia, and Mrs. Clemm formed the happiest little family he had ever seen. Edgar was sick at the time of the visit, and the visitor was invited to his chamber. He found the poet reclining on a lounge, with Mrs. Clemm and Virginia in attendance upon him. A small table by his side held three or four books, a bouquet of sweet flowers, and some delicacies. Mrs. Osgood and other ladies called. Edgar Poe, lying sick upon his lounge, was the centre of attraction. The conversation, in such company, naturally took a literary turn. The invalid poet directed it, and all listened, enchanted by his low, rich, musical voice, and the brilliant play of his imagination.

Mrs. Osgood, writing after Poe's death, speaking of her first acquaintance with Poe, soon after the publication of *The Raven*, said: "Of the charming love and confidence that existed between his wife and himself, I cannot speak too earnestly, too warmly. It was in his own simple yet poetical home that, to me, the character of Edgar Poe appeared in its most beautiful light. Playful, affectionate, witty; alternately docile and wayward as a

The Poe Cult

petted child; for his young, gentle, idolized wife, and for all who came, he had, even in the midst of the harassing literary work, a kind word, a pleasant smile, a graceful and courteous attention."

Poe was the most accomplished literary man we have ever had. He possessed wonderful skill as a literary artist. All through his life he was refining and improving his work, and was never satisfied until he had made it as perfect as possible. Compare, for instance, "A Pæan," of 1831, and "Lenore," of 1843. The only fair way to examine an author is with the enthusiasm of a lover and the intelligence of a scholar. Poe has seldom been thus examined: His critics have been either devoted admirers who could see no fault in him, or enemies who could see no good. Another class of critics has appeared within the present generation who have examined him with a candid judgment and unprejudiced minds. These have not been his own countrymen, except in rare cases, but the scholars of England, France and Germany. Poe showed his mastery of artistic composition in his remarkable restraint, in his wonderful concentration. Goethe says "in his illuminations the master shows himself."

In May, 1846, Poe commenced a prose dun-

The Poe Cult

ciad in *Godey's Lady's Book*, his celebrated critical papers, "The Literati of New York." The majority of these "Literati" have passed to their merited oblivion, but the series, which ran from May to October, caused an immense sensation among the dunces and their friends as well as the reading public generally. Poe caused as much terror among the literary pygmies as Gulliver caused among the Lilliputian pygmies. As the natural result of such just but severe criticism, he made a "host of enemies among persons toward whom he entertained no personal ill-will." These little men and their friends nursed their wrath, and kept it warm until Poe died, then they attacked the character of the defenseless poet, inventing lies, grossly exaggerating the truth, and besmirching the honor of him who was the soul of honor. Poe has been dead sixty years, yet these libels still live and circulate, and are believed by ignorant or malicious persons, although they have been refuted a hundred times.

Poe was one of the first American writers who appeared on the lecture platform. He possessed a personal magnetism which completely fascinated his audience. His voice was beautifully modulated, his language was ele-

The Poe Cult

gant, and his opinions were bold, original, and always forcefully expressed. His first lecture, or at least, the first one of which we have record, was delivered before the William Wirt Institute, in Philadelphia, on the 25th of November, 1843. The subject was "The Poets and Poetry of America." It was in this lecture that Poe gave public utterance to his private opinion of Rufus W. Griswold's pretentious compilation, bearing a similar title to that of Poe's lecture. His criticism was just, but extremely severe, and excited much attention in Philadelphia, where both Poe and Griswold lived at the time. The latter person was highly indignant, and never forgave his assailant, but, although he took no notice of it at the time, he waited until Poe was in his grave, and then published the Memoir which has been pronounced one of the three most infamous Memoirs ever written—the other two being Froude's Life of Carlyle, and Hogg's "Domestic Manners and Private Life of Sir Walter Scott."

Poe repeated the lecture on "The Poets and Poetry of America" in New York, on the 25th of February, 1845, after the publication of The Raven had made him famous. Of this lecture, he himself said: "I took occasion to speak what I know to be the truth. I told these

The Poe Cult

gentlemen (the audience was composed chiefly of editors and publishers), with a few noble exceptions they had been engaged for many years in a system of indiscriminate praise and puffery of American books."

As the summer of 1846 approached, the health of Mrs. Poe continued to decline, and dreading the effects of the city heat upon the already feeble health of the lovely and loved invalid, the little family removed to Fordham. The new home was a tiny Dutch cottage, containing four rooms, but it was cool, quiet, and away from the excitement and temptation of New York. The parlor was the poet's study. Here he wrote "Ulalume," "Eureka," and other productions of his "lonesome, latter years." The room was neatly furnished: red and white matting covered the floor; four cane-seat chairs, a small table, a set of hanging bookshelves, and two or three engravings completed the furniture. A lady, Mrs. Gove-Nichols, who visited Poe's cottage home, in 1846, says: "There was an air of taste and gentility about the place that must have been lent to it by the presence of its inmates. So neat, so poor, so unfurnished, and yet so charming a dwelling I never saw. There was an acre or two of greensward fenced in about the house, as smooth as velvet, and as clean as

The Poe Cult

the best-kept carpet. Mr. Poe was so handsome, so impassive in his wonderful, intellectual beauty, so proud and reserved, so entirely a gentleman upon all occasions—so good a talker that he impressed himself and his wishes even without words upon those with whom he spoke. His voice was melody itself. He always spoke low, even in a violent discussion, compelling his hearers to listen if they would know his opinion, his facts, fancies, or philosophy. Mrs. Poe looked very young; she had large black eyes, and a pearly whiteness of complexion which was a perfect pallor. Her pale face, her brilliant eyes, and her raven hair gave her an unearthly look. One felt that she was almost a disrobed spirit, and when she coughed, it was made certain that she was rapidly passing away."

Darker and darker grew the shadows over the Fordham cottage—sadder and sadder grew the hearts of the devoted husband and mother as the autumn passed, and the winter of 1846-7 drew near. The sickness of his wife, and his own ill health incapacitated Poe from literary work, his only source of revenue, and, consequently, the family were reduced to the last extremity, wanting even the barest necessities of life—at a time, too, when Mrs.

The Poe Cult

Poe required the little delicacies so grateful to the sick. At this, the darkest hour of Poe's life, an angel of mercy in the person of Mrs. Mary Louise Shew appeared on the scene, and relieved the wants of the family, and brought comfort to the sick room of the dying wife. I have not the heart to linger over the death-bed, which was as sad and pathetic as ever told by poet or romance writer. The weather was intensely cold—for it was midwinter—and Mrs. Poe suffered from the chills that followed the hectic fever of consumption. The bed was of straw, and covered only with spread and sheets; no blanket. Here the dying lady lay, wrapped in her husband's overcoat, with a large tortoise-shell cat in her bosom. The cat and the coat afforded the only warmth to the sufferer, except that imparted by her mother chafing her feet and her husband her hands. And thus died, on January 30, 1847, at the early age of twenty-five, the wife of America's greatest genius.

This loss, though long expected, was not the less crushing when it came at last. To a lady of Massachusetts, who had sent him expressions of sympathy, Edgar Poe wrote, a few weeks after his wife's death: "I was overwhelmed by a sorrow so poignant as to deprive me, for several weeks, of all power of

The Poe Cult

thought or action." Mrs. Clemm told me that "Eddie" often wandered to his wife's grave at midnight, in the snow and rain, and threw himself upon the mound of earth, calling upon her in words of devoted love, and invoking her gentle spirit to watch over him. It is now known that Edgar Poe was never the same man after the death of his idolized young wife. For weeks and months after that crushing sorrow, he was buried in an agony of grief, from which nothing could arouse him. His books and studies were abandoned; his pen was thrown aside; his usual occupations were neglected. He wandered up and down the country by day, and at night kept long and solitary vigil at the grave of his "Lost Lenore." He who rarely smiled and never ~~laughed~~ before, now might almost be said to have "never smiled again." The unhappy Master of the Raven, tortured by intolerable memories of the lost one, sought to drown his sorrow in the waters of Lethe. It was not for pleasure that he thus sank his noble intellect. "I have absolutely no pleasure in the stimulants to which I sometimes so madly indulge," he wrote within a year of his death. "It has not been in the pursuit of pleasure that I have periled life and reputation and reason. It has been in the desperate attempt to escape from

The Poe Cult

torturing memories, from a sense of *insuperable loneliness*, and a dread of some strange, impending doom."

But it must not be supposed that this "mad indulgence" was habitual. It was only occasional, only when driven to despair by "intolerable sorrow," that he was guilty of follies and excesses, "which," as he very justly complained, "are hourly committed by others without attracting any notice whatever." But he was famous—he was the author of *The Raven*—they were unknown, and, therefore, unnoticed. It is very easy for men who live in comfort, men who have no trials of poverty and sorrow, to condemn Edgar Poe as a drunkard; whereas, if the truth were known, he seldom drank, while they are regular drinkers, and for mere sensual gratification, but he only when driven to it by misery and despair. This is proved by the unimpeachable testimony of such persons as N. P. Willis, who was in daily intercourse with him for months, and saw nothing of the "frequent fits of intoxication," of which his malicious biographer spoke; L. A. Wilmer, during an intimate friendship of twelve years, saw nothing of it; George R. Graham, who was associated with him daily for two years, saw nothing of it; S. D. Lewis, the husband of Estelle Anna Lewis,

The Poe Cult

and who lived in the closest intimacy with Poe, never saw him drink a glass of beer, wine, or liquor of any kind. In fact, it has been proved beyond a doubt, that it was only at rare intervals, and more especially after the death of his adored wife, that he indulged in stimulants at all. Upon these occasions, the lines in Dermody's "Enthusiast," might be applied to Poe:

"He who such polished lines so well could form,
Was Passion's slave, Intoxication's child;
Now earth-enamored, a groveling worm,
Now seraph-plumed, the wonderful, the wild."

In the autumn of the year in which Poe lost his wife, he wrote that strange, mysterious, fascinating poem, "Ulalume," which was published in the *American Review*, for December, 1847. Willis copied the poem in the *Home Journal*, January 1, 1848, with the following remarks: "We do not know how many readers we have who will enjoy as we do this exquisitely piquant and skillful exercise of variety and niceness of language. It is a poem full of beauty—a curiosity (and a delicious one, we think), in philologic flavor." When Willis wrote this notice, it was not known that Poe was the author of the poem, which was published anonymously. Mrs. Whitman, speaking of this strange threnody, says: "This poem,

The Poe Cult

perhaps the most original and weirdly suggestive of all his poems, resembles, at first sight, some of Turner's landscapes, being, apparently, without form, and void, and having darkness on the face of it. It is, nevertheless, in its basis, although not in the precise correspondence of time, simply historical. Such was the poet's lonely midnight walk; such, amid desolate memories and sceneries of the hour, was the new-born hope enkindled within his heart at the sight of the morning star—'Astarte's be-diamond crescent'—booming up as the beautiful harbinger of love and happiness, yet awaiting him in the untried future," etc.

The original autograph of "Ulalume" was sold at auction, in New York, several years ago, which contained a stanza that was suppressed before the poem was published. Poe once recited the whole poem at an evening gathering in Richmond, Va. One of the guests, Miss Susanna Ingram, was deeply affected, but confessed that she could not understand it at a first hearing, and asked the privilege of seeing it in manuscript. The next morning Poe sent her a copy of the poem accompanied by a characteristic note, which runs as follows: "Monday evening. I have transcribed 'Ulalume' with much pleasure, dear

The Poe Cult

Miss Ingram, as I am sure I would do anything at your bidding, but I fear you will find the verses scarcely more intelligible to-day in my manuscript than last night in my recitation. I would endeavor to explain to you what I really meant by the poem if it were not that I remember Dr. Johnson's bitter and rather just remarks about the folly of explaining what, if worth explaining, would explain itself. He has a happy witticism, too, about some book which he calls 'as obscure as an explanatory note.' Leaving 'Ulalume' to its fate, therefore, and in good hands, I am yours truly, Edgar A. Poe."

Although Poe published only this one poem in 1847—his "most immemorial year," his busy brain was not idle. It was during the last months of that year "Eureka" was planned, thought out, and mostly written. Mrs. Clemm told me that, when engaged upon the composition of this extraordinary prose-poem, he would walk up and down the porch in front of the cottage in the coldest nights of December, with an overcoat thrown over his shoulder, gazing at the stars, and "pondering the deep problem" of the universe, until long after midnight. Having finished "Eureka," Poe used it as a lecture, which he delivered in New York on Thursday evening, February 3, 1848.

The Poe Cult

The night was stormy, but there was present a “select but highly appreciative audience that remained attentive and interested for nearly three hours, under the lecturer’s powerful, able, and profound analytical exposition of his peculiar theory on the origin, creation, and final destiny of the universe.” “Mr. Poe’s delivery” was described as “pure, finished, and chaste in style; his power of reasoning acute, his analytic perceptions keen. The lecturer appeared inspired; his eyes seemed to glow like those of his own Raven.”

The special object of the lecture was to obtain funds to start *The Stylus*, a magazine in which he intended “to maintain a sincere and fearless opinion,” and “absolutely independent criticism,” guided by the “intelligible laws of art.”

Having failed to make any money by “Eureka” as a lecture, he determined to publish it in book form. Having carefully revised and enlarged it, that generous patron of literature, George P. Putnam, published the work in the Spring of 1848. “Eureka” was the most ambitious production of Poe’s pen, and the least successful.

Early in the Summer of 1848, Poe visited Richmond, and became acquainted with John R. Thompson, the editor of the *Southern*

Literary Messenger, who engaged him to write for the magazine. The September number contained an elaborately eulogistic review of Mrs. Estelle Anna Lewis's poems; and the October number was enriched by Poe's famous "The Rationale of Verse." While in Richmond, at this time, he renewed his acquaintance with his early sweetheart, Elmira Royster (now Mrs. Shelton, a rich widow). Rumor has it that he was about to engage himself to this lady when he received a complimentary poem from Mrs. Sarah Helen Whitman, whom he had first seen in 1845, when he was returning from Boston to New York, and had stopped in Providence *en route*. The two had never met until in October, 1848, when Poe, provided with a letter of introduction, called upon her, and after a short acquaintance of forty-eight hours, asked her to marry him. As the story of Poe's affair with Mrs. Whitman is told at length in other portions of this volume, it need not be repeated here; suffice it to say that they were engaged, and were on the eve of being married, when the engagement was broken off forever. Mrs. Whitman died on the 27th of June, 1878, remaining to the last an enthusiastic admirer and defender of Edgar A. Poe.

The Poe Cult

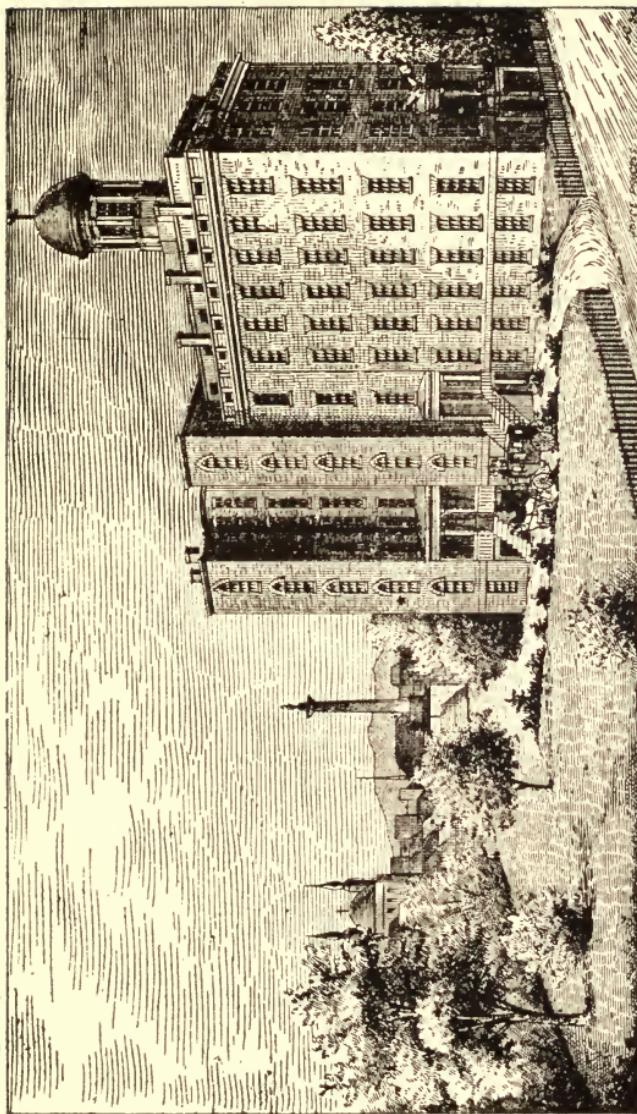
Edgar Poe passed the Winter and Spring of 1849 at his cottage in Fordham. The only variety in the monotony of his secluded life was the occasional visit of a friend, or a visit of a few days by Mrs. Clemm and himself to their friend, Mrs. Estelle Anna Lewis, in Brooklyn.

On the 30th of June, 1849, Poe departed from this lady's house, where he and Mrs. Clemm had passed the previous night, on his last journey to the South. July, August and September were spent in Richmond and Norfolk, and in both cities he delivered his lecture on "The Poetic Principle," and was everywhere received with cordial appreciation. In September he became engaged to Mrs. Shelton, and he wrote to Mrs. Clemm that his marriage would take place on the 17th of October. This letter, although announcing the "happy event," was very sad, as though the writer was oppressed by a sense of impending doom. On Tuesday, the 2d of October, he left Richmond by boat for Baltimore, where he arrived the next morning. His intention was to go to Fordham and to bring Mrs. Clemm to Richmond for his wedding. He told her to be ready to return with him on the 10th, that he had determined to pass the rest of his life amid the scenes of his happy youth. What

The Poe Cult

became of Poe, after he arrived in Baltimore on that October morning, will probably never be known. It was an election day. His cousin, the late Judge Neilson Poe, told me that, on the evening of October 3d, he was informed that a gentleman named Poe was in a back room of the Fourth Ward polls, on Lombard Street, between High and Exeter Streets. On going there, he found Edgar Poe in a state of stupefaction. He was told that his cousin had been “cooped” and voted all over the city. The dying poet was taken to the Washington College Hospital, on Broadway, now the Church Home and Infirmary. There, on the following Sunday, October 7th, he died, and was buried the next afternoon at four o’clock. It was a dull, cold, dreary day—such a day as he had described in ‘Ulalume’:

“The skies they were ashen and sober,
The leaves they were crisped and sere.”



WASHINGTON COLLEGE UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL,
BALTIMORE, MD.

(Star by third window at left denotes the room in which the poet died.)



THE POE CULT.

One of the most astonishing facts in the literary annals of America, if not of the world, is the amazing rise of what may be called the Poe cult. The unhappy master of "The Raven" was the victim of a fate more strange, more romantic, more tragical than poet ever imagined or novelist ever penned. His life was one of suffering, sorrow, and song; he died a wretched death in a public hospital,

Unwept, unhonored, unsung.

His funeral was pathetic in its meagre attendance, its scant ceremony and absence of mourning. Only eight persons were present at the funeral of one of the immortals of earth.

At the time of this humble funeral, on October 8, 1849, no one could have dreamed that within twenty-five years Edgar Poe would be regarded by the cultured people of all lands as the most unique and remarkable genius in American literature. Equally astonishing is the fact that many persons who were old enough to remember Poe are still alive, when his letters possess a market value of five times

The Poe Cult

as great as that of Byron's, twice as great as Shelley's, a hundred times as great as Bryant's, Longfellow's, Lowell's, and other contemporaneous American authors. Still more remarkable is the fact that the manuscripts of those poems, for which he received trifling sums, have become as precious as the Sibylline leaves, and are worth their weight in gold. If the original manuscript of "The Raven" were still in existence, American millionaires would contend for its possession, and \$10,000 would be gladly paid for the inestimable treasure. Yet, for this poem, which has brought more honor upon American literature than any other single American poem, and established Poe's fame as the most original of American poets—a poem which stands alone in poetry as the "Venus" in sculpture and "The Transfiguration" in painting—for this wonderful poem whose weird and mysterious fascination has thrilled the world, Poe was paid only ten dollars, a sum which is now paid for an ordinary love story in a weekly newspaper.

Upon the rare occasions when the first editions of Poe's poems have been offered for sale at auction, the excitement has run high, the bidding has been spirited, and the prices have broken the record. The first edition of *Tamerlane and Other Poems* (Boston, 1827), was

The Poe Cult

never offered at public auction until the Spring of 1892. In fact, for sixty years, one copy only, and that an imperfect one, was known to exist, and that was in the locked room of the British Museum, there to stay "for evermore." So when it was announced that a second copy of the precious volume was to be sold at auction, the excitement among wealthy collectors was great. As no copy had ever been sold, there was no record price. The bidding was high and rapid—\$500, \$750, \$1,000, \$1,500, \$1,750; finally the tiny paper volume of forty pages, whose intrinsic value was about ten cents, was knocked down for the enormous sum of \$1,850. The purchaser, proud of his prize, sent it to Paris and had it bound in mosaic at a cost of \$300. In the Spring of 1894 another copy of the first edition of *Tamerlane* was discovered by an obscure young lawyer in an obscure town in Vermont. The finding of a third copy naturally lessened the value of the work as a unique or rare book, and when it was offered to several persons who are interested in literary curios, no offer above \$1,200 could be secured for it. What became of that copy of *Tamerlane* I have no means of knowing. In the Autumn of 1900, a copy was sold at auction, bringing the record price of \$2,050.

The Poe Cult

The immense price paid for an exemplar of the first edition of *Tamerlane* shows the remarkable advance that has taken place in the value of Poeana during the last ten years. But all records were broken in this respect at the sale of Mr. Frederick William French's library on the 23d, 24th and 25th of April, 1901. The second edition of *Tamerlane*, Baltimore, 1829, a beautiful copy in the original boards, uncut, was sold to a dealer for \$1,300, an advance of \$200 on the price of the McKee copy sold in November, 1900. No. 1 of the *Prose Romances* of Edgar A. Poe, containing "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and "The Man that Was Used Up" in the original brown paper wrappers, brought an even \$1,000; an enormous price, but only two copies are known to be in existence. Two autograph letters of Poe's at the same sale fetched, respectively, \$250 and \$210.

In mentioning these fabulous prices paid for Poe rarities, I cannot help thinking that the pity of it is that the unhappy master of "The Raven" should have lived in poverty, often in absolute want, when the price of one of his rare editions would have made him comfortable for years; when the price of one of his autograph letters would have provided heat to warm the benumbed limbs of his dying

The Poe Cult

wife, wine to stimulate her physical weakness, and delicate food to nourish her body, exhausted by consumption.

Mr. William Nelson, of Paterson, New Jersey, a few years ago, was fortunate enough to secure the original manuscript of "The Bells" for \$275. He is an enthusiastic Poe man, and his collection contains several first editions; also, *The Southern Literary Messenger* and *Graham's Magazine*, of both of which Poe was editor. He has also a large and interesting collection of newspaper clippings relating to Poe, running from a single paragraph to long editorials. Mr. Nelson has spent much time and money in forming his collection, but when the Poe mania takes possession of a man, time counts for nothing, and money is thrown away with reckless prodigality.*

The Poe cult is progressive: beginning with admiration of his melodious poems and extraordinary prose tales, the admiration of the poetry leads to an enthusiasm for the poet and an interest in everything relating to him. The shabby little homes in which he lived, and loved, and worked, become pilgrims' shrines. The few books which he owned become precious relics. When the old Allan mansion

*Since the above was written, Mr. Nelson has sold his Poe rarities, "The Bells" bringing \$2,100.

in Richmond, Virginia, was pulled down a few years ago, there was a pretty scramble for Poe relics, for in that house Poe's happy childhood and youth were passed. Thirty dollars was asked for the mantelpiece of the poet's room, thirty-five for the bureau, five for the lock, etc. The cane with which old Mr. Allan, Poe's adopted father, threatened to strike the wayward poet if he did not leave the house after their irreconcilable quarrel, should have brought a fabulous price could it have been found among the curios collected there. Had any of Poe's juvenile verses been discovered, they would have brought hundreds, yes, thousands of dollars. What became of those precious manuscripts containing poems to his boyish sweethearts will never be known.

It is strange that there are so few of Poe's letters in existence, for he was a voluminous letter writer, and had many correspondents among the literary men and women of his time. The late Judge Neilson Poe, of Baltimore, who was a cousin of the poet, had several very interesting letters from Edgar Poe, which I have seen. These disappeared soon after the Judge's death, and have never been traced. Their publication would throw much light on certain periods of Poe's life. Mrs. Clemm was in possession of several

The Poe Cult

valuable Poe letters and other things at the time of her death in Baltimore, on February 16, 1871. These also disappeared, no one knows whither.

The present Poe cult commenced at the time of the unveiling of the monument to the poet in Baltimore on the 17th of November, 1875. It was a memorable occasion, not only for American literature, but for the literature of the world. It was the first recognition of the extraordinary genius of the author of "The Raven." It drew together a notable assemblage, including several who had been associated with Poe in his youth and early manhood. Among these were Professor Joseph H. Clarke, Poe's first teacher in Richmond, who died in Baltimore in 1886, in the ninety-second year of his age; John H. B. Latrobe, the distinguished Southern lawyer, the last survivor of the three gentlemen, who, by awarding to Poe the prize for the best prose tale, gave him the first lift up the literary ladder; John H. Hewett, the editor of the *Saturday Visitor*, in which the prize story, "The Manuscript Found in a Bottle," was published; Dr. John E. Snodgrass, the last editor of the *Saturday Visitor*, and associate editor of the *American Museum*, in which several of Poe's early poems and tales were published; Dr. Nathan Covington

The Poe Cult

Brooks, editor of the *American Museum*; Doctor John G. Morris, president of the Maryland Historical Society; Nathaniel H. Morrison, Provost of the Peabody Institute, Baltimore; Judge Neilson Poe, the nearest surviving relative of the poet; and Walt Whitman, the last in name, but first in fame. (An extended account of the unveiling of the Poe monument is given in a later article in this volume, entitled, "The Truth about Edgar Allan Poe.")

Dr. Johnson said that Oliver Goldsmith touched nothing which he did not ornament. It can be as truly said of Poe that he touched nothing which he did not immortalize. The room at the University of Virginia, where he spent a few months of his early manhood, is more frequently visited than are the dormitories of the long line of orators, statesmen and scholars who were educated at that celebrated seat of learning. Every magazine with which he was associated, either as editor or contributor—*Graham's*, *Godey's*, the *Southern Literary Messenger* and other periodicals—has been remembered simply because Poe's name was connected with it. The little cottage at Fordham, where the saddest years of his life were spent—those lonesome latter years after the death of his wife—is visited by strangers

The Poe Cult

from distant lands because it was the home of the poet, where, wifeless, moneyless, hopeless, he made his last desperate, despairing struggle with pitiless fortune. His tomb in Westminster churchyard, Baltimore, where the poet's "tantalized spirit blandly reposes," has made the spot the "Poet's Corner" of the Westminster of the Monumental City. Men and women's names have been saved from oblivion because they were in some way or other associated with Poe, either as friends or enemies. The gentle Mrs. Osgood, the malignant Griswold, the devoted Mrs. Whitman, the ferocious Briggs, the genial General Wetmore, the accomplished John R. Thompson, and many others will occur to all students of the life and works of the author of "The Raven."

Carlyle regarded it as a remarkable fact that six lives of Burns had been published within a generation after his death. Within the same space of time, nine lives of Poe were published, while several others have been issued during the last decade. These numerous biographies show that the Poe cult is ever on the increase, and that the reading public welcomes every addition to its knowledge of the most interesting and picturesque figure in American literature.

The Poe Cult

The Poe cult is not confined to any one, two or three countries. It has spread through the civilized world. It includes the cultured people of Europe, America, and in the lands beyond the sea. It has made Edgar A. Poe a classic. Numerous editions of his works have been published in London and Edinburgh. In France he is as much admired as many French authors. A dozen editions of his poems and tales have appeared in Germany; his tales have been published in Spain and Italy; his poetical works in Australia; and one of his stories, "The Oval Portrait," has been translated into modern Greek and published at Athens. The end of the Poe cult cannot be foretold. It has not reached its height. Even while I write, a new edition of his works in seventeen volumes has been published.

It should always be remembered that the Poe cult owes its origin and stimulus to the gifted and fearless Sarah Helen Whitman. When malice had exhausted itself in heaping insult upon the name of the dead poet, it was the delicate affection of Mrs. Whitman—who loved him and whom he loved—that dared to penetrate the "mournful corridors" of that sad, desolate heart, with its "halls of tragedy and chambers of retribution," and tell the true, but melancholy, story of the author of "The

The Poe Cult

Raven." It was she who generously came forward as "One of the Friends" of him who was said to have no friends. She was his steady champion from first to last. Whether it was some crack-brained scribbler who tried to prove Poe "mad," or some accomplished scholar who endeavored to disparage him in order to magnify some other writer, or some silly woman who attempted to foist herself into a little brief notice by relating "imaginary facts" about the poet's hidden life, Mrs. Whitman was always ready to defend her dead friend.

After a long and exhaustive study of the life of Edgar A. Poe during a quarter of a century, I have come to the conclusion that he was neither the demon painted by some of his early, nor the angel described by some of his later biographers. He mingled among men neither as a "prying fiend" nor as a "bewildered angel." He was a man of rare and remarkable genius, with the infirmities that often accompany it. While endowed with extraordinary intellectual gifts, he was a most unfortunate victim of circumstances. Left an orphan in his infancy, he was adopted by a man who reared him in luxury as the heir of a splendid fortune, when suddenly, in his twentieth year, he was thrown upon the world

The Poe Cult

without a dollar. Then began that long, desperate, never-ending struggle for bread. The pen was his weapon, literature his pursuit, poverty his fate, fame his reward.

The Poe Cult

POE: REAL AND REPUTED.

We are told that
“Seven Grecian cities claimed Homer dead,
In which the living Homer begged his bread.”

It is not so astonishing that the birthplace of the Father of Poetry should be unknown, for he lived at the dawn of literature, at a prehistoric period; but it is strange that so famous a poet as Edgar A. Poe—a poet of our own century, of our country, and almost of our own age—should have lived and died a mystery to his contemporaries, and remain in many respects a mystery still, although nearly sixty years have elapsed since his death, and nine lives of him have been written.

For twenty years after his death, the time of his birth was unknown, and the place of his birth was uncertain. The present writer knew Mrs. Clemm, the poet’s aunt and “more than mother,” in her last years; she said positively that “Eddie was born on the 19th of January, 1809, at Boston.” Thus, Poe was one of that illustrious group whose genius was the glory of the nineteenth century: Tennyson, Glad-

The Poe Cult.

stone, Holmes, and Mrs. Browning, the greatest of all poetesses." At the time of our poet's birth, Byron, Scott, Shelley, Coleridge, Southey, Campbell, and Tom Moore had revived the glory of the "elder day" of English poetry, and "the delusive splendor that had so long gilded the Augustan age of Anne paled before the comprehensive culture, the marvelous intellectual expansion, that distinguished the first thirty years of the present century."* Not since the "spacious times of great Elizabeth" had the English language been enriched by so brilliant a galaxy of poets.

For several years after Poe's death, his grave was unknown, and for more than a quarter of a century no stone marked the resting-place of the poet whose genius has conferred more glory upon American literature than any other American writer. Strangers from far-off countries came to Baltimore and visited Poe's grave as a pilgrim's shrine, and great was their astonishment when they discovered, after much inquiry and diligent search, the poet's grave in a neglected spot of an obscure churchyard.

Poe was a most refined and cultured gentle-

*From Prof. Henry E. Shepherd's Address at the Unveiling of the Poe Monument in Baltimore, November 17, 1875.

The Poe Cult

man, whose friends were the purest and loveliest ladies in the land—a man whose society was sought by all who admired genius and pitied the misfortunes that often attend it.

Tom Moore had his Russell, Carlyle his Froude, Poe his Griswold. Rufus W. Griswold was the self-chosen biographer of Poe, and he produced the most infamous biography that has ever been published in any language. Lies were invented, facts falsified, the truth tortured into falsehood, and everything was done to blast forever the poet's memory.

Upon this unscrupulous memoir the author of "The Raven" has been misjudged by many persons for more than fifty years. It is much easier to start a falsehood than to stop it when once on its travels. No man has suffered more from slander, living and dead, than Edgar A. Poe. I have been at much trouble in order to obtain the truth about the poet, from his earliest years to his tragical death. I have consulted with the living, and unearthed the opinions of the dead, and this is the result:

When a schoolboy in Richmond, Poe's teacher was Prof. Joseph H. Clarke, who, in speaking of his famous pupil, described him as having a "tender and sensitive heart"; he said he was "a boy who would do anything to serve a friend," and that "his nature was en-

The Poe Cult

tirely free from selfishness, the most common fault of boyhood." One of his classmates, Col. John T. L. Preston, late professor at the Virginia Military Institute, says that Edgar A. Poe was "a generous, free-hearted boy, kind to his companions, and always ready to assist them with hand and head."

I quote these estimates of Poe because they show that he possessed the very qualities which have been denied him, namely, kindness of heart, and an unusual freedom from selfishness.

The most malignant enemy of Poe accuses him of but one vice, and with injustice unparalleled, makes what was an occasional fall, an habitual sin. Upon this subject we have the testimony of many witnesses of unimpeachable integrity.

T. W. Gibson, his roommate at West Point, describes the class of 1830 as having many wild fellows in it, but he says that he does not think "Poe was intoxicated while at the Academy." N. P. Willis, with whom he was associated for six months in editing the *New York Mirror*, testifies to his regular attendance at the office, and his perfect propriety of conduct; Lambert A. Wilmer, during an intimate friendship of twelve years, saw nothing of his alleged dissipated habits; George R. Gra-

The Poe Cult

ham, who was in daily intercourse with him for two years, saw nothing of it.

George Gilfillan, an extravagant English writer, long since forgotten, who was nothing if not sensational, published, in the *London Critic*, a brutally unjust article on Poe, charging him with having "no heart, no honorable feelings, not having even one virtue linked to his thousand crimes"; denounced him as a "combination of the fiend, the brute, and the genius"; declaring that "his tongue was set afire of hell"; that he "rushed into every excess of riot"; ending his monstrous tirade of lies by the assertion that Poe "caused the death of his wife that he might have a fitting theme for 'The Raven,'" repeating what a more poetical, but not more truthful writer had already said—that the poet "deliberately sought his wife's death that he might embalm her memory in immortal dirges." Gilfillan did not know or care that "The Raven" was written more than a year before the event happened which the poem was said to commemorate.

Boyd, the "Country Parson," after calling Poe "a black sheep," censuring him for his "drunken degradation" and "inveterate selfishness," coolly adds that he "starved his wife and broke her heart." Why these writers should malign the unoffending dead is

stranger than the fiction that they invented for their purpose. We can only account for it upon the supposition that slander loves a shining mark. The splendid and ever-increasing fame of Poe made him a shining mark, and many, who would not have dared to attack him while he was alive, have since his death shot their poisoned arrows at him—"Mortuo leoni et lepores insultant," which may be freely rendered "asses kicking at a dead lion."

Poe's love for his child-wife, and his devotion to her in sickness, was one of the most beautiful traits in his character, remarked and admired by all who knew the poet and his little family. Even Griswold, who seldom found anything to admire in Poe, speaks of calling upon the poet, once in Philadelphia, and finding him worn out from long attendance at the sick bed of his wife.

There is nothing sadder in romance—nothing more pathetic in poetry, nothing more touching in real life, than the deathbed of Virginia Poe. She died in midwinter, and her disease was consumption. The weather was intensely cold, and the dying woman suffered terribly from the chills that followed the hectic fever of that insidious malady. She lay upon a straw bed, her only covering being a spread and sheets, no blankets. In this piti-

The Poe Cult

able condition, dying by inches, the only warmth that relieved her almost freezing body was imparted by her husband's overcoat, in which she was wrapped, and a large tortoise-shell cat in her bosom. At her head stood the poet chafing her hands, while her mother rubbed her feet. Thus died, at the early age of twenty-five, the wife of the poet who has conferred such lustre upon American literature.

The lovely and gifted Mrs. Frances Sargent Osgood, who was a favorite visitor at the home of the poet, wrote a sketch of Poe, a few weeks before her own early death, in which she said: "Of the charming confidence that existed between Poe and his wife, I cannot speak too earnestly, too warmly. I believe she was the only woman he ever truly loved; and this is evidenced by the exquisite little poem, 'Annabel Lee,' of which she was the subject, and which is by far the most tender and touchingly beautiful of all his songs. The most lovely of its verses describes in language of true poetical beauty the death of the loved and unforgotten wife:

"The wind blew out of a cloud, chilling
My beautiful Annabel Lee.
So that her *high-born kinsmen* came
And bore her away from me.'"

The Poe Cult

A more than sufficient answer to the cruel and reckless assertion that Poe treated his wife unkindly is found in the fact that Mrs. Clemm, Virginia's mother, loved her son-in-law with more than maternal devotion, and never deserted him in sickness, in poverty, in distress; that she fondly cherished his memory during her life, and in dying, asked to be buried by the side of her "darling Eddie." I assert this of my own knowledge.

After the death of his wife, Poe became acquainted with Mrs. Sarah Helen Whitman, whom he had previously seen and admired. He first saw her, one moonlight night, when he was visiting Providence, where she lived. It was midnight; the poet was passing her home, when he saw her strolling in the garden. She was clad all in white. The place, the hour, the scene, made an immediate and indelible impression upon his poetical imagination, and he related the circumstance in one of his most beautiful poems, worthy of himself, of her, and of the most exalted passion. Some time after this he met her, and after a short but ardent courtship, they became engaged, but the affair was broken off upon the eve of the marriage.

Mrs. Whitman survived her poet-lover twenty-eight years. When they parted for-

The Poe Cult

ever, not in sorrow, or in anger, her last words were, "I love you." That she loved him truly, sincerely, faithfully, she proved during all the years that elapsed between his death and hers. She was his defender at all times, and under all circumstances. Perhaps the most passionate poems ever penned by any American poet were inspired by the memory of her dead but unforgotten lover.

THE BOYHOOD OF EDGAR A. POE.

If, as the poet says, the child is father to the man, the strange and romantic story of the youth of Edgar A. Poe must be both interesting and instructive to readers, young and old. Poe's parents were actors, and he was born almost in the greenroom. His wanderings, which never ceased, began five weeks after his birth, when he was taken to the home of his paternal grandfather in Baltimore.

During the next two years, young Edgar accompanied his parents on their professional tour; going from city to city, knowing neither the happiness nor the comforts of a home, but suffering often from cold, and sometimes from hunger. Before he was three years old, he was left an orphan by the almost simultaneous death of both of his parents, the mother in Richmond, and the father in Norfolk, Va. Mr. Allan, a rich, childless merchant of the former city, attracted by the beauty and precocious wit of the little fellow, adopted him. The change which now took place in Edgar's

life reads like a fairy tale: from poverty, want, and misery, he passed to a home of luxury, where he soon became the idol of the house, being treated as a young prince, clothed in velvet, and faring sumptuously every day. His proud, imperious temper, instead of being controlled, was encouraged; his voice soon became the law of the house. The boy was bright, clever, and fascinating, and his adopted father petted and spoiled him by over indulgence, and by unduly stimulating his natural gifts. He was early taught dancing, drawing, and dramatic recitation, and before he was six years old, was made a sort of show-child, being brought into the parlor to entertain the company by reciting speeches and dramatic pieces. This was all wrong, and Mr. Allan, while amusing his guests, was injuring the boy for life.

When Edgar was sent to school, the teacher was forbidden to punish him. Adjoining the play ground was a vegetable garden, which the boys were not allowed to enter under the penalty of wearing a turnip, carrot, or cabbage around the neck during school hours. One day Edgar violated the rule, and was compelled to wear one of the vegetables suspended around his neck. After school, he ran home still wearing the obnoxious carrot, or turnip.

The Poe Cult

Mr. Allan was incensed that his boy should be treated so disrespectfully. He went at once to the school, and, after lecturing the teacher, paid what was due, and took the child from school.

Mr. Allan passed part of the Summer at the White Sulphur Springs, then as now the most fashionable watering place in the South. Here young Edgar shone brilliantly with his fine clothes, his pony, his pocket money, his watch, jewelry, etc. He was allowed to take his place in the ball room, and dance with the young girls. Prococious in all things, he had his sweethearts before he was fairly in his teens, and wrote sentimental verses to his little favorites. Mr. Allan, who saw good in everything the boy did at this time, was delighted with his rhymes, and was going to have them published, but he was dissuaded from doing so by a gentleman whom he consulted about the matter. He told Mr. Allan that Edgar's natural pride and egotism would be injuriously affected by the appearance of his verses in a book; and so, the matter was dropped.

When Edgar was eleven years old, he was placed in an English and classical school. Here, he soon became conspicuous for his cleverness, and without being a close student, his brilliant intellectual gifts, and fine physical

qualities, made him by common consent the head of the school, before he was there three years. In all athletic sports, he was a perfect master; he could run with the swiftness and endurance of an Indian; he was a great leaper; a good boxer, as one of his old school friends once wrote to me "he was the best, the most daring, and most enduring swimmer that I ever saw in the water." One of his swimming feats is still remembered in Richmond. It was swimming from Ludlam's wharf to Warwick Bar, six miles down the James River, on a hot summer day. A gentleman of Richmond who witnessed the daring feat said Poe did not seem at all fatigued, and walked back to the city immediately after landing. Poe was only fifteen years old at the time he accomplished this aquatic feat, which was done against one of the strongest tides ever known in the James River. The boys of Richmond were proud of their bold companion, and they deemed his youthful exploit greater than Byron's famous feat of swimming across the Hellespont. A more foolish aquatic exploit is recorded of Poe: One winter day, he and a companion were standing on the banks of the James when Poe dared his friend to jump in the river and swim to a certain point with him. No sooner said than done, and the boys were soon floun-

The Poe Cult

dering in the half frozen water. Benumbed and exhausted, they landed more dead than alive, and paid very dear for their foolish feat by an illness of several weeks. Poe is described at this time as a haughty, handsome, self-willed, impetuous, pugnacious boy, always ready to engage in either mental or physical fights, and generally coming off victorious.

Had it been the deliberate purpose of Poe's early friends to destroy his naturally fine, frank, generous disposition, they could not have adopted better means to accomplish their intention than they did. While his pride and vanity were stimulated his heart was not cultivated; although Mr. Allan lavished his money upon the boy, he did not foster his affectionate disposition, and utterly failed to touch the cords of sympathy that lay dormant in the young orphan's heart. That Edgar Poe was touched by affection and appreciated kindness is shown by his gratitude to Mrs. Stannard. This lady was the mother of Robert Stannard, one of his friends. Poe went home with him one day, and Mrs. Stannard welcomed him with some kind and gracious words. The heart of the boy was touched, and from that hour, Mrs. Stannard became, as he himself long afterward said: "The one idolatrous, purely ideal love of my tempest-tossed

The Poe Cult.

boyhood." His exquisite lines "To Helen," were inspired by the memory of this lady, who became the confidante of his boyish troubles, and when she died Poe, who was only fourteen at the time, was in the habit of visiting her grave every night, and passing hours in solitary vigils.

Edgar Poe was brought up with the expectation of inheriting a princely fortune; every youthful whim was indulged, and every extravagant fancy encouraged, but when he reached his twenty-first year, he was turned adrift upon the world without a dollar, and from that time until his melancholy death, twenty years later, he never earned a cent, except by his pen, and very little by that, for he lived at a time when literature was scarcely recognized as a profession. The conduct of Mr. Allan in driving Poe from his house has never been satisfactorily explained, but had the author of the *Raven* remained in the luxurious home of his youth, our country might have wanted its most remarkable genius.

POE'S FEMALE FRIENDS.

Edgar Poe's life was not all dark and desolate. It was his singular good fortune, from his birth to his death, to win and hold the love and friendship of many sweet and sympathetic women. Carlyle says the "story of genius has its bright sides as well as dark." The bright side of Poe's life was, as Washington Irving expresses it, when it "was gladdened by blessed womankind." The poet possessed many of those personal qualities and intellectual gifts which interest and fascinate the gentle sex: he was handsome, polished, and richly imaginative, and a perfect master of all the graceful refinements of language. Perhaps there never lived a poet so truly appreciative of the loveliness of woman as Edgar Poe. He was a worshiper of beauty, believing, with a recent poet, that of all beauty a beautiful woman is the supremest. His was the delicate, ethereal, poetical sentiment of the Greek worship of an ideal beauty, so exquisitely personified by Nausicaa in the *Odyssey*.

The Poe Cult

Poe's female friends, with one or two exceptions, were women who were able to sympathize with his lofty intellectual ambition, able to "point to higher worlds," although, perhaps, not capable of "leading the way" for him to follow. Proud, solitary, and ambitious, he found a never-failing congeniality and sympathy in the society of bright and lovely women, some of whom almost realized the creations of his wonderful imagination: *Ligeia*, *Morella*, *Lenore*.

Mrs. Allan, who adopted Edgar Poe when he was left a homeless orphan, was his first female friend. She always stood between him and her cold, stern husband. But, unfortunately, she died just as the young poet reached his manhood. Another early friend of Poe was Mrs. Helen Stannard, the mother of one of his schoolmates. She died when he was fourteen, and night after night he visited her grave, oppressed by the thought that she was lying there all alone. It was during those lonesome vigils that he became fascinated by the unfathomable mysteries of the other world, which impressed his whole life and much of his life work. To his mind and heart, the dead, although unseen, were ever present, seeing, knowing, hearing him. Those midnight churchyard vigils, with their unforgotten

The Poe Cult

memories, furnish a key to some of the strange, mysterious circumstances of his extraordinary life. In those silent, solitary communions with the beloved dead, questions arose in the sombre chambers of his imagination which were long afterward remembered in the musical cadences of his stately verse.

The pervading and enforcing spirit of some of his most wonderful productions, prose and verse, is the "awful mystery of death." Those familiar with his writings will recall the sad, beautiful story of "Ligeia," which displays more than any of his remarkable tales, "an imagination, royally dowered and descended." So, also, in "Morella," the characters are profoundly interested in the same mystic investigation of life and death, of love that outlives death, of death that cannot quench love. The sombre mystery of the grave inspired the exquisite poem, "The Sleeper," which tells in words of mournful music of a beautiful woman, coffined in her deep and lasting sleep. More sombre still is the "Conqueror Worm," which is a wild, despairing wail over the hopelessness of receiving tidings of the dead. In the lyric, "For Annie," the treatment, though the subject is still of the dead, is free from that dark despair which broods over most of his wonderful verse. But, of all the poetry in-

The Poe Cult

spired by his grateful memory of Mrs. Stannard, the best, the most beautiful, the most eloquent is "Lenore," commencing,

"Ah, broken is the golden bowl, the spirit flown forever!

Let the bell toll! A saintly soul floats on the Stygian river!"

Another poem addressed to this lady has a still more classic grace. I refer to the "Lines to Helen," commencing,

"Helen, thy beauty was to me."

This dainty poem was written before Poe had reached his fifteenth year. James Russell Lowell says these lines have a grace and symmetry of outline such as few poets ever attain, and they are valuable as displaying "what can only be expressed by a contradictory phrase, innate experience."

Thus some of the most remarkable of Poe's poems were inspired by her of whom he wrote, a year or two before his death: "As the friend of my boyhood, the truest, tenderest of this world's most womanly souls, and an angel to my forlorn and darkened nature."

In 1836 Poe married his fair young cousin, Virginia Clemm. All who knew Virginia Poe speak of her matchless beauty and loveliness. Captain Mayne Reid, who frequently visited the family when they were residing in one of

The Poe Cult

the suburbs of Philadelphia, described their home as small but beautified by flowers, enlivened by the singing of birds, and illumined by the presence of the poet's young wife, who was "angelically beautiful in person, and not less beautiful in spirit. No one who remembers the dark-eyed daughter of the South, her face so exquisitely lovely, her gentle, graceful demeanor, no one who has spent an hour in her society, but will endorse what I have said of this lady, who was the most delicate realization of the poet's ideal. But, the bloom upon her cheek was too pure, too bright, for earth. It was consumption's color—that sadly beautiful light beckons to an early grave."

The tender grace of the love of Edgar and Virginia Poe inspired his exquisite ballad, "Annabel Lee," of which she was the heroine. Nothing could be more beautiful and suggestive than these lines:

"A wind blew out of a cloud, chilling
My beautiful Annabel Lee;
So that her high-born kinsmen came,
And bore her away from me."

Edgar Poe was a very domestic man, and found his best and truest happiness in the society of his wife and mother, who loved him devotedly and never lost confidence in him.

The Poe Cult

He was seldom away from home for an hour, unless his darling Virginia or Mrs. Clemm was with him, except when engaged in his literary pursuits. "The three lived one for the other," said Mrs. Clemm. Poe's devotion to his delicate wife was one of the most beautiful traits in his character, and her death at the early age of twenty-five was the greatest grief of his life. It was in memory of her that he wrote his weird requiem of "Ulalume," a poem that has pleased and puzzled alike the most thoughtful and imaginative minds.

The unceasing love and devotion of Mrs. Clemm to Edgar Poe—a devotion that outlived the life of the poet's wife, a love that only ended with Mrs. Clemm's death—was the natural result of his love and devotion to her daughter. To Mrs. Clemm he addressed a sonnet showing his appreciation of her great kindness and unfailing patience and sweetness of disposition. The last lines are particularly beautiful:

"My mother—my own mother—who died early,
Was but the mother of myself; but you
Are mother to the one I loved so dearly,
And thus are dearer than the mother whom I knew,
By that infinity with which my wife
Is dearer to my soul than its soul-life."

The Poe Cult

Soon after the publication of "The Raven" Poe met a lady who was destined to exercise a good and powerful influence over his life. This lady was Mrs. Sargent Osgood, one of the most gifted and impassioned poets of the decade of American literature between 1840 and 1850. She has furnished a very interesting account of her first meeting with Poe:

"My first meeting with the poet was at the Astor House. A few days previous Mr. Willis handed me, at the *table d'hôte*, that strange and thrilling poem, 'The Raven,' saying that the author wanted my opinion of it. Its effect upon me was so singular, so like that of 'weird, unearthly music,' that it was with a feeling almost of dread that I heard that he desired an introduction. Yet I could not refuse without seeming ungrateful, because I had just heard of his enthusiastic and partial eulogy of my writings, in his lecture on American Literature. I shall never forget the morning when I was summoned to the drawing room to receive him. With his proud and beautiful head erect, his dark eyes flashing with the electric light of feeling and thought, a peculiar and indescribable blending of hauteur and sweetness in his expression and manner, he greeted me calmly, gravely, almost coldly—yet with so marked an earnestness that I could not

help feeling deeply impressed by it. From that moment until his death we were friends."

In another communication Mrs. Osgood speaks of her "affectionate interest" in the poet, adding:

"I think no one knew him, no one has known him personally—certainly no woman—with-out feeling the same interest. I can sincerely say that I have never seen him otherwise than gentle, generous, well-bred, and fastidiously refined. To a sensitive and delicately nurtured woman, there was a peculiar and irresistible charm in the chivalry, grace, and almost rever-ence with which he approached all women who won his respect. It was this which first won and always retained my regard for him."

Mrs. Osgood furnishes a charming glimpse of the poet in his own home, sitting beneath the romantic picture of his lost Lenore, spending hour after hour in literary composition, trac-ing in the most exquisite hand ever written by poet the rare and radiant fancies as they flashed through his wonderful brain. She de-scribes a visit at his house toward the close of his residence in New York, when he seemed unusually gay and light-hearted. Mrs. Os-good's narrative runs as follows:

"Virginia, his sweet wife, had written me a pressing invitation to come to them—and I

who never could resist her affectionate summons, and who enjoyed his society far more in his own house than elsewhere, hastened to Amity Street. I found him just completing his series of papers entitled 'The Literati of New York.' 'See,' said he, displaying in laughing triumph several little rolls of narrow paper, 'I am going to show you, by the difference in length of these, the different degrees of estimation in which I hold all you literary people. In each of these, one of you is rolled up and fully discussed. Come, Virginia, help me!' And one by one they unfolded them. At last they came to one that seemed interminable. Virginia, laughing, ran to the side of the room with one end, and her husband to the opposite with the other. 'And whose linked sweetness long drawn out is this?' said I. 'Hear her!' he cried, 'just as if her vain little heart didn't tell her it's herself.' "

Mrs. Osgood's friendship for the poet lasted until his death, and she survived him only seven months. In the last edition of her poems is one inspired by her friendship for Poe. I quote the last verse:

"Love's silver lyre he played so well
Lies shattered on his tomb;
But still in air its music spell
Floats on through light and gloom;

The Poe Cult

And in the hearts where soft they fell
His words of beauty bloom
Forevermore."

Mrs. Osgood was worthy of Poe's enthusiastic admiration: her mind and heart, her face and figure, were alike exquisite. She was of medium height, slender, dainty, and graceful; her eyes were large, luminous, and full of expression; her complexion was pale, and offered a striking contrast to her dark hair; her features were refined and her whole appearance possessed a rare, delicate beauty, which was both interesting and charming. No person can look upon the face of this lady, a face glowing with enthusiasm and a dreamy, tropical sunshine, and wonder that a man of Poe's deep and earnest feeling, a man of his passionate appreciation of beauty and genius, should have been so prodigal and eloquent in his praise of her person and poetry.

Soon after Poe moved to Fordham, in the summer of 1846, he became acquainted with Mary Louise Shew. The poet's wife was dying of consumption, and the anxiety caused by her sickness prevented him from engaging in any literary work; thus his only source of income was cut off. The situation of the little household grew worse and worse every day,

The Poe Cult

and absolute starvation threatened them. At this critical moment Mrs. Shew's kind offices were enlisted in their behalf; she raised money, bought comforts for the dying wife, and became the ministering angel of the family.

After the death of Mrs. Poe, Mrs. Shew continued her gentle charity to the stricken members of the Fordham cottage. It was chiefly through her exertions that a purse of one hundred dollars was raised at the Union Club of New York. Among the contributors was Gen. Winfield Scott, who said, "true-hearted Americans should take care of their poets as well as of their soldiers."

Mrs. Estelle Anna Lewis, who is known in the literary world as "Stella," was another kind friend who assisted Poe at this time of his greatest need. This lady—author of the imaginative poem, "Records of the Heart," and other poetical works, including "The Child of the Sea," which Poe mentioned as "strikingly original" and "warmly imaginative"—was one of the last and truest friends the poet ever had. He himself said that he had for her the "affection of a brother." Mrs. Lewis wrote:

"I saw much of Mr. Poe during the last year of his life. He was one of the most sensitive and refined gentleman I ever met. My girlish poem, "The Forsaken," made us acquainted.

The Poe Cult

He had seen it floating the rounds of the press, and wrote to tell me how much he liked it—‘It is inexpressibly beautiful,’ he said, ‘and I should very much like to know the young author.’”

The day before Poe left New York for Richmond (June 30, 1849), he and Mrs. Clemm dined with Mr. and Mrs. Lewis and stayed at their house all night. The latter, in giving an account of this last visit, said:

“Mr. Poe seemed very sad and retired early. On leaving the next day, he took my hand in his, and said, ‘Dear Stella, my much beloved friend, I have a presentiment that I shall never see you again. If I never return, write my life. You can and will do me justice.’”

Mrs. Lewis promised, and they parted to meet no more in this life.

The name of Sarah Helen Whitman will be forever associated with the name of Edgar A. Poe, as that of the woman he most passionately loved during life, and who most jealously guarded and defended his memory when he was dead. Their names will be linked together like the name of Surrey and the Fair Geraldine, Byron and Mary Chaworth, Burns and Highland Mary. It is well known that after the death of his child-wife, Virginia Clemm, Poe, seeking “surcease of sorrow for

his lost Lenore," become engaged to Mrs. Whitman. Of this short-lived engagement it has been said: "It opened a prospect of happiness—even for him, the desolate and despairing. Like the gleam of the light that cheered Sinbad in the Cave of Death and restored him to life, did this engagement hold out a saving hope to the soul of the unhappy master of 'The Raven,' and promise to restore him once again to love."

Mrs. Whitman was the very type of woman to interest such a man as Poe. Dr. W. E. Anthony, of Providence, R. I., who knew her, has furnished me with a sketch of Mrs. Whitman. He says her nature was essentially feminine, having a great personal magnetism; her conversation was replete with wit, imagination and sentiment. She had a beautiful, intellectual face, a fine figure, and a brilliant complexion. She always wore one style of dress, winter and summer, year in and year out. It was strikingly original and set off her personal charms to the best advantage. A profusion of curls fell over her exquisitely shaped forehead, while over the back of her head was thrown a white veil, which fell to her shoulders. She received visitors in a room lighted by rose-colored lamps, and the room seemed a shrine and she a sibyl.

The Poe Cult

To win the hand of this woman seemed to Poe his last chance to reestablish his desolate home, and he pleaded with such passionate ardor, such burning eloquence, such irresistible love, that, in spite of the entreaties of her mother and the warnings of her friends, Mrs. Whitman engaged herself to him. Having won this advantage, he urged an immediate marriage. Again she yielded to his passionate pleading, and late in November he arrived in Providence full of anticipation of happiness. When he called upon Mrs. Whitman, that lady met him, and, as she herself relates:

"Gathering together some papers which he had intrusted to my keeping, I placed them in his hands without a word of explanation or reproach, and, utterly worn out and exhausted by the mental conflicts and anxieties of the last few days, I drenched my handkerchief with ether and threw myself on a sofa, hoping to lose myself in utter unconsciousness. Sinking upon his knees beside me, he entreated me to speak to him. I responded almost inaudibly, 'What can I say?' 'Say that you love me, Helen.' '*I love you.*' These were the last words I ever spoke to him."

Poe left the house without another word, and never saw Mrs. Whitman again. The breaking off of this famous engagement gave

The Poe Cult

rise to all sorts of rumors, the most scandalous of which Rufus W. Griswold enlarged and embellished. Mrs. Whitman denied Griswold's story, as shown in "The Truth about Edgar Allan Poe," printed later on in this work.

Mrs. Whitman died on the 27th of June, 1878, in the seventy-sixth year of her age. She was a believer in spiritualism, and, at her funeral, instead of religious service, several of her friends pronounced eulogies. Over her casket was thrown a white drapery, in the folds of which were green ivy leaves. Her grave was lined with laurel and evergreens, and each friend dropped flowers; and thus in love and tender sympathy the last gentle service was rendered to the last of Poe's Female Friends.

POE AND MRS. WHITMAN.

Burns' Highland Mary, Petrarch's Laura, and other real and imaginary loves of the poets, have been immortalized in song, but we doubt whether any of the numerous objects of poetical adoration were more worthy of honor than Mrs. Sarah Helen Whitman, the friend and defender of Edgar A. Poe. That he should have inspired so deep and lasting a love in the heart of so true and pure a woman would alone prove that he was not the social pariah his vindictive enemies have held up to the world's wonder and detestation. The poet's love for Mrs. Whitman was the one gleam of hope that cheered the last sad years of his life. His letters to her breathed the most passionate devotion and the most enthusiastic admiration. One eloquent extract from his love letters to Mrs. Whitman will suffice. In response to a passage in one of her letters in which she says, "How often have I heard men, and even women, say of you, 'He has great intellectual power, but no principle, no moral

sense!' He exclaims, 'I love you too truly ever to have offered you my hand, even to have sought your love, had I known my name to be so stained as your expressions imply. There is no oath which seems to me so sacred as that sworn by the all-divine love I bear you. By this love, then, and by the God who reigns in heaven, I swear to you that my soul is incapable of dishonor. I can call to mind no act of my life which would bring a blush to my cheek or to yours.'"

Why the engagement was broken, and by whom, still remains buried in mystery, but that Poe was guilty of any "outrage" at her house upon the eve of their intended marriage was emphatically denied by Mrs. Whitman. She pronounced the whole story a "calumny." In a letter before me she says: "I do not think it possible to overstate the gentlemanly reticence and amenity of his habitual manner. It was stamped through and through with the impress of nobility and gentleness. I have seen him in many moods and phases in those 'lonesome latter years' which were rapidly merging into the mournful tragedy of death. I have seen him sullen and moody under a sense of insult and imaginary wrong. I have never seen in him the faintest indication of savagery and rowdyism and brutality."

The Poe Cult

Some of the most tenderly passionate of Mrs. Whitman's verses were inspired by her affection for Poe. She wrote six sonnets to his memory, overflowing with the most exalted love and generous sympathy. The first of these sonnets ends thus:

“Thou wert my destiny : thy song, thy fame,
The wild enchantments clustering round thy name,
Were my soul's heritage—its regal dower,
Its glory, and its kingdom, and its power.

In one of Mrs. Whitman's letters, now lying before me, she says: “So much has been written, and so much still continues to be written, about Poe by persons who are either his avowed or secret enemies, that I joyfully welcome every friendly or impartial word spoken in his behalf. His enemies are uttering their venomous fabrications in every newspaper, and so few voices can obtain a hearing in his defense. My own personal knowledge of Mr. Poe was very brief, although it comprehended memorable incidents, and was doubtless, as he kindly characterized it in one of his letters of the period, ‘the most earnest epoch of his life;’ and such I believe it to have been. You ask me to furnish you with extracts from his letters, literary or otherwise. There are imperative reasons why these letters cannot and ought not be published at present—not that

there was a word or a thought in them discreditable to Poe, though some of them were imprudent, doubtless, and liable to be construed wrongly by his enemies. They are for the most part strictly personal. The only extract from them of which I have authorized the publication is a *fac simile* of a paragraph inserted between the 68th and 69th pages of Mr. Ingram's memoir in Black's (Edinburgh) edition of the complete works of Poe. The paragraph in the original letter (dated Nov. 24, 1848) consists of only eight lines: 'The agony which I have so lately endured—an agony known only to my God and myself—seems to have passed my soul through fire, and purified it from all that is weak. Henceforward I am strong: this those who love me shall see, as well as those who have relentlessly endeavored to ruin me. It only needed some such trials as I have just undergone to make me what I was born to be by making me conscious of my own strength.' This was a protest against the charges of indifference to moral obligations so often urged against him, which I permitted Mr. Gill to extract for publication from a long letter filled with eloquent and proud remonstrance against the injustice of such a charge, are the only passages of which I have authorized the publication.

The Poe Cult

Other letters have been published without my consent. I have endeavored to reconcile myself to the unauthorized use of private letters and papers, since the effect of their publication has been on the whole regarded as favorable to Poe."

It was Mrs. Whitman who first attempted to trace Edgar Poe's descent from the old Norman family of Le Poer, which emigrated to Ireland during the reign of Henry II. of England. Lady Blessington, through her father, Edmund Power, claimed the same illustrious descent. The Le Poers were distinguished for being improvident, daring and reckless. The family originally belonged to Italy, whence they passed to the north of France, and went to England with William the Conqueror.

When Stephané Mallarmé, an enthusiastic admirer of Poe, undertook to translate his works into French, he addressed Mrs. Whitman in a complimentary letter, from which the following passages are translated: "Whatever is done to honor the memory of a genius, the most truly divine the world has seen, ought it not first to obtain your sanction? Such of Poe's works as our great Beaudelaire left untranslated—that is to say, the poems and many of the literary criticisms—I hope to make known to France. My first

The Poe Cult

attempt, 'Le Corbeau,' of which I send you a specimen, is intended to attract attention to a future work now nearly completed. I trust that the attempt will meet your approval, but no possible success of my future design could cause you, Madam, a satisfaction equal to the joy, vivid, profound and absolute, caused by an extract from one of your letters in which you expressed a wish to see a copy of my 'Corbeau.' Not only in space—which is nothing—but in time, made up for each of us of the hours we deem most memorable in the past, your wish seemed to come to me from so far, and to bring with it the most delicious return of long cherished memories; for, fascinated with the works of Poe from my infancy, it has been a long time that your name has been associated with his in my earliest and most intimate sympathies. Receive, Madam, this expression of gratitude such as your poetical soul may comprehend, for it is my inmost heart that thanks you."

THE LOVES OF EDGAR A. POE.

The splendid fame that has crowned the name of Edgar A. Poe within the memory of living men has made him one of the most interesting personalities, not only in American Literature, but in the literature of the world. Proudly conscious of his rare and remarkable genius, the author of *The Raven* mingled in a cold and unsympathetic world with a haughty defiance. But, beneath that stern and cynical exterior, was a heart full of romantic sentiment, and quickly responsive to kindness and affection.

Poe, himself, was the offspring of a romantic marriage between a young actress and a Baltimore law student, and he proved himself a worthy son of his parents. Before he had completed his sixteenth year, he wooed and won the heart of a young girl in Richmond who was destined to be his first and his last love, also. Elmira Royster was the fair daughter of one of the proudest families of the Old Dominion, and Poe, although the son of a poor player (*poor* in every respect), was

The Poe Cult

the recognized peer of the best in Virginia's capital. Years afterwards, the poet, speaking of youthful love, quotes the assertion of George Sand that "les anges ne sont plus pures que le coeur d' un jeune homme qui aime en vérité," and remarks that it would be truth itself were it averred of the love of him who is at the same time young and a poet. He cites the boyish love of Byron for Mary Chaworth which affected the whole subsequent life of the noble bard, adding, "she to him was the Egeria of his dreams—the Venus Aphrodite that sprang, in full and supernal loveliness, from the bright foam upon the storm-tormented ocean of his thoughts." Miss Royster lived opposite to Poe's home in Richmond, and, naturally, they became acquainted—an acquaintance which soon ripened into mutual love.

This youthful love affair continued until Poe left Richmond for the University of Virginia. They agreed to keep up a frequent correspondence during their separation, but the father of the young lady, who disapproved of the affair, intercepted his letters.

He hastened to marry his daughter to a more desirable husband. It was not until a year or two after she became Mrs. Shelton that Poe learned why his passionate love let-

The Poe Cult

ters received no answer from his sweetheart. The effect of this boyish attachment is perceptible in many of the poet's juvenile verses.

Long years after the death of her poet-lover, Mrs. Shelton recalled him as "a beautiful boy;" quiet, agreeable, but sad-mannered; "full of strong prejudices, and passionately fond, even in those early days, of everything beautiful and having a natural invincible detestation of everything coarse and unrefined." He drew beautifully; "he drew a pencil likeness of me in a few minutes." He was, also, very fond of music. "Edgar," continues the lady, "was very generous, and warm and zealous in any cause he was interested in, being enthusiastic and impulsive."

When Poe's adopted father, John Allan, a wealthy merchant of Richmond, drove him from the only home he had known for twenty-two years, the outcast was received into the family of his aunt, Mrs. Marie Clemm, in Baltimore, and, until his unhappy life ended, his home was with her, whether in Richmond, Baltimore, Philadelphia or New York.

Mrs. Clemm was the daughter of Gen. David Poe, whose services and sacrifices in the American Revolution entitled him to the respect of his countrymen. His daughter was poor, but she gave "Eddie," as she always

The Poe Cult

called the poet, a home rich in love. Her only child, Virginia, was at that time a lovely girl of about ten years old. Poe became her teacher. They were both young, and daily and hourly together. Naturally, they fell in love with each other. Upon their youthful love, Poe founded one of his early tales, "Leonora," the scenes of which are laid in the Valley of the Many-colored Grass. He describes the "sweet recesses of the vale;" the "Deep and narrow river, brighter than all save the eyes of Eleonora;" "the soft, green grass, besprinkled with yellow buttercup, the white daisy, the purple violet, and the ruby-red asphodel—all so beautiful that it spoke to our hearts of the love and glory of God." Here they "lived all alone, knowing nothing of the world without the valley—*I, and my cousin and her mother.*" "The loveliness of Eleonora was that of the seraphim, and she was a maiden artless and innocent as the brief life she had led among the flowers; no guile disguised the fervor of love which animated her heart."

In 1835, Poe was appointed editor of the *Southern Literary Messenger*, a magazine which had been started in Richmond a short time before. Under his management the *Mes-*

senger soon gained a national reputation, and within one year its circulation increased from seven hundred to five thousand, which was a large circulation for a magazine sixty years ago. But, in the midst of his brilliant literary success, Poe felt most painfully his absence from her who had been his companion for four years. During all these years he had watched her as she grew more lovely, more charming, more interesting, and now when he wished to make her his wife, she was two hundred miles away. He became depressed, morbid, melancholy. At his solicitation, Mrs. Clemm removed to Richmond with her daughter, and, on the 16th of May, 1836, he was married to his cousin, she being not quite fourteen years old. The rest of that year was perhaps the brightest and happiest of Poe's life. His salary, indeed, was small (\$15.00 a week), but it afforded sufficient support for the little family. Mrs. Clemm was a wonderful manager, and proved the truth of Goethe's saying that beauty is cheap when taste is the pur-chaser.

I have told the story of Poe's married life in another article—of his perfect devotion in sickness and in health—of his sorrow and desolation when a cruel death took her from him forever. One who knew the family well

The Poe Cult

describes Virginia a year or two after her marriage as possessing a matchless beauty and loveliness; her eyes were as bright as any houri; and her face defied the genius of Canova to imitate. Added to the charms of person was a disposition of surpassing sweetness. The tender love and devotion existing between the poet and his beautiful young wife was remarked by all who knew them. Poe's unhappiness was inborn, and came not from any domestic cause, for both Mrs. Clemm and her daughter cared for him as though he were a child. They spared him all those little personal matters which annoy sensitive people. They selected his collars and cravats, his gloves and cuffs. He was always neatly dressed; Mrs. Clemm told me he preferred for ordinary wear a dark-gray suit, with a turn-down collar and black cravat. She said she had often heard Eddie declare that he never saw any person so beautiful as his own sweet little wife. He did not know, at that time, that Virginia's beauty was of that fatal kind which consumption imparts to its victim, and that "she had been made perfect in loveliness only to die." In a letter written to her relative, the late Judge Neilson Poe, Mrs. Clemm gives some interesting details of the domestic life of the poet.

The Poe Cult

“Eddie was domestic in all his habits, seldom leaving home for an hour unless his darling Virginia or myself were with him. He was truly an affectionate, kind husband, and a devoted son to me. He was impulsive, generous, affectionate, noble. His tastes were very simple, and his admiration for all that was good and beautiful very great. We three lived only for each other.”

Theodore Parker said that every man of genius has to hew out for himself, from the hard marble of life, the white statue of Tranquillity. Applying this to Poe, Mrs. Whitman with all her womanly sympathy asked the world to look with pity and reverent awe upon the unhappy poet’s efforts to achieve that beautiful and august statue of Peace. She remarks further that one clear glance into the corridors of his life—“its halls of tragedy and chambers of retribution,” would appall the stoutest heart. It was after the death of his charming child-wife that the poet’s heart became so desolate and suffered from what he himself describes as “a sense of insupportable loneliness and a dread of some strange impending doom.” Like many highly imaginative men, Poe was deeply interested in the awful mystery of death. In most of his poetry and in many of his prose tales, he seeks to un-

The Poe Cult

ravel the impenetrable secrets of the grave, finding a never-ceasing fascination in its gloomy recesses. Mrs. Clemm told me that "Eddie" often wandered to his wife's grave at midnight, in the snow and rain, and threw himself upon the mound of earth, calling upon her in words of most tender affection to watch over him. For weeks and months after this, the crowning sorrow of his life of sorrow, the poet was crushed with grief. His usual occupations were neglected, his pen was thrown aside; his books were not opened; he wandered about the country by day, and at night kept long and solitary vigil at the grave of his "lost Lenore." From that time, he was a changed man: he who never laughed and rarely ever smiled, scarcely ever smiled again.

In the autumn of 1848, a gleam of sunlight illumined Poe's dark and fateful life, for at that time he first became personally acquainted with Mrs. Sarah Helen Whitman. Twenty-four years afterwards, Mrs. Whitman wrote a long and interesting account of her love affair with the poet. It appears that he called upon her at her residence in Providence, R. I., bringing a letter of introduction from a mutual friend, Miss Maria J. McIntosh. Mrs. Whitman's presence seemed to inspire him with an immediate hope that she could, if she would,

raise him from the misery and despair from which he had been suffering since the death of his wife, nearly two years before; and, also, that she could give an inspiration to his genius, of which he had, said Poe, as yet given no token. "Notwithstanding the eloquence with which he urged upon me his wishes," said Mrs. Whitman, "I knew too well that I could not exercise over him the power that he described to me. In parting with him, I promised that I would reply to him and tell him what I could not then say to him." Poe wrote to Mrs. Whitman soon after leaving her, but she delayed writing from day to day, unwilling to give him pain by a refusal, and yet fearing to mislead him and compromise herself by any word of friendly sympathy and encouragement. However, after a few weeks, an ardent courtship won the lady's consent to a conditional engagement, followed by her consent to an immediate marriage. On Saturday, December 24, 1848, Poe wrote to a minister, asking him to perform the ceremony on the following Monday evening; he wrote at the same time to Mrs. Clemm that he and his bride should arrive in New York on Tuesday, December 27th. The condition upon which Mrs. Whitman consented to marry Poe was that he should not touch liquor of any kind. Mrs.

The Poe Cult

Whitman says her friends were anxious to break the rash engagement, and were strongly opposed to the hasty marriage. On Saturday afternoon, she received a note informing her that Poe had that very morning broken his promise by drinking wine in the barroom of the Earl House; he took but a single glass, and showed no evidence of excitement in his manner or appearance; but this proof of his infirmity of purpose at such a moment convinced his *fiancée* that no influence of hers could avail to save him, and she broke the engagement. He returned to New York that evening, and the lovers never met again, but Poe's love for her was one of the cherished memories of Mrs. Whitman's life, and her deep interest in his name and fame ceased only with her own death, which took place on the 27th of June, 1876.

In the summer of 1849, Poe visited Richmond, and there among the scenes of his youth and early manhood, he resumed his acquaintance with the object of his first love, Elmira Royster, who was at that time the widow Shelton. Their love was renewed, and an engagement quickly followed, and the marriage was fixed for the ensuing October. While on his way to New York, to bring Mrs. Clemm to Richmond, which was to be their future

home, Poe was overtaken by the calamity in Baltimore, which resulted in his death on the 7th of October, 1849.

Besides these various loves of Edgar Poe, he had several friendships, more or less ardent. His friendship for Mrs. Frances Sargent Osgood was cemented by a congeniality of taste and a poetical sympathy. Each celebrated the other in verse, and Mrs. Osgood, a few months before her own early death—she survived Poe only seven months—wrote a most interesting personal sketch of the poet, giving a detailed account of his home life in New York, after the publication of *The Raven* had placed him among the first of living poets. In a well-known drawing room in New York, once the favorite resort of the literati, there hung a portrait of Poe, which was described as having the aspect of a beautiful and desolate shrine from which the Genius had departed, recalling certain lines in one of the antique marbles:

“Oh melancholy eyes !
Oh empty eyes, from which the soul has gone
To see the far-off countries.”

Near this luminous but impassive face, with its sad and soulless eyes, says Mrs. Whitman, was a portrait of Poe’s unrelenting biographer, Griswold. In a recess opposite hung a por-

The Poe Cult

trait of the fascinating Mrs. Osgood, whose genius both had so fervently admired, and for whose coveted praise and friendship both had been competitors. Looking at the beautiful face of this lady, so full of enthusiasm, and dreamy, tropical sunshine—remembering the eloquent words of her praise, as expressed in the prodigal and passionate exaggerations of her verse, one ceases to wonder at the rivalries and enmities enkindled within the hearts of those who admired her genius and grace—rivalries and enmities which the grave itself could not cancel or appease.

The lover and his loves are long since dead, but, so immortal is the touch of genius, the memory of those ladies is embalmed in their country's literary history. This sketch of the loves of Edgar A. Poe cannot be more appropriately concluded than by quoting two verses from an exquisite poem of Sarah Helen Whitman, entitled, "The Portrait of Poe."

Sweet, mournful eyes, long closed upon earth's sorrow,
Sleep restfully, after life's fevered dream!
Sleep, wayward heart! till some cool bright morrow,
Thy soul, refreshed, shall bathe in morning's beam.

Though cloud and shadow rest upon your story,
And rude hands lift the drapery of thy pall,
Time, as a birthright, shall restore thy glory,
And Heaven rekindle all the stars that fall."

POE AND STODDARD.

The death of Richard Henry Stoddard, on the 12th of May, 1903, removed from the world the last of the literary contemporaries of Edgar A. Poe. Their acquaintance began in the Summer of 1845, when Poe was the editor, owner, and principal contributor to the *Broadway Journal*. Mr. Stoddard has told the story of his acquaintance with Poe—told it often and well—told it with interesting embellishment, blending fact and fiction in equal portions. The courtesies of journalism are more regarded now than they were twenty-four years ago. I have before me an article from a leading New York newspaper, of May 3, 1885, headed, “Reminiscences of Poe, Poet, Lover, Liar.” By Richard Henry Stoddard. He says: “When I was in the twentieth year of my age, I was under the delusion that I could write poetry. I belonged to the school of Keats, though I was only in the infant class. Something that I had read suggested an Ode to a Grecian Flute, and I wrote one,

The Poe Cult

or tried to, which is not precisely the same thing. I made a fair copy of the effusion, and sent it to the great Mr. Poe, who was then editing the *Broadway Journal*. It was published in Clinton Hall, not far from where Temple Court is. I waited patiently two or three weeks, at the end of which time, the immortality of print being denied me, I took a day and went down to the office of the *Broadway Journal*. Mr. Poe was not there, but I obtained his address, and retraced my steps. I found the house in which he lodged. It was on the southerly side of East Broadway, probably in the neighborhood of Clinton Street. I was directed to his rooms, which were on the second floor. He was dressed in black, I remember, and was very courteous to me. The Ode should appear next week. I thanked him, and rising to leave, saw that his wife, who was, also, in black, was lying asleep on a bed—a fragile gentlewoman, whom I pitied, for I felt she had not long to live. I saw her mother at that same time, who was also in black. I bowed to her, and departed. The Ode did not appear next week, but there was a reference to it in the carner devoted to Correspondents. The editor doubted the originality of my verse, and declined to publish it unless he could be assured of its authenticity. I

The Poe Cult

was startled, but complimented, for had I not written so well that Poe suspected that I was a literary thief. I was hurt, but I was flattered and bettered, for I was no longer afraid of the poet's criticism. I took another forenoon, a week later, and went again to the office of the *Broadway Journal*. It was a boiling day in June. The editor was not in his chair, but was expected to return soon. I walked up and down the hot street, and at the end of an hour, returned, and was informed that Mr. Poe was in, and was shown to his room. He was in black, as before, asleep in his chair. The publisher wakened him. 'What do you want?' he snapped out. 'I have come, Mr. Poe, to assure you of the authenticity of the "Ode on a Grecian Flute."' He glared at me, and without waiting to hear what I had to say, declared that I was a liar, and consigned me to instant perdition. Then he rose surlily, and threatened to kick me out of the office if I did not get out at once; which I did."

Mr. Stoddard said, several years ago, that he had made over \$700 by writing this anecdote in various shapes, style, length and breadth. The whirligig of time has brought about many changes, and none equal to the change that has taken place in the estimation

The Poe Cult

of Poe. For twenty-five years after his death, the dead lion was kicked by living asses—the dead raven was plucked by living buzzards, and other foul birds. Richard Henry Stoddard was neither an ass nor a buzzard, but he did much to keep Poe from coming to his kingdom. He defended Griswold, while condemning Poe. He declared that "Griswold was not more the enemy of Poe than I was, or am." That's true. They were both enemies, one as much as the other. Stoddard's dislike of the poet was caused by that threat to kick him out of his office. On that he claims to have made \$700, and has associated his name with that of the author of *The Raven*; had the threat been actually carried out, Stoddard might have made twice as much money, and gained an immortal fame. See what he missed by his precipitous retreat from the sanctum of the irate poet? To be kicked into fame seldom happens to a man. By acting the better part of valor, and running away, Stoddard lost the opportunity of his life.

Walt Whitman told of a very different experience which he had with Poe. He saw him once, when he called at the office of the *Broadway Journal*, as Stoddard did, to inquire about a piece. He says that Poe was very cordial: "I have a distinct and pleasant re-

The Poe Cult

membrance of his looks, voice, manner and matter; he was very kindly and human, but subdued, and perhaps a little agitated."

Edmund Clarence Stedman, in his admirable essay entitled, "Edgar Allan Poe," was the first to draw public attention to the fact that the poet never made a dollar except by his pen, and he says, moreover, the duty of self-support was not one to which he had been trained, and he adds, "Imagine Shelley, who made his paper boats of bank notes, Byron and Landor, who had their old estates, forced to write by the column for their weekly board." Then, remember that Poe was brought up in luxury, and taught to expect a handsome fortune—that when he reached manhood, he was turned adrift without a dollar. Gifted as few are gifted, he made a splendid fight against fate.

INGRAM'S LIFE OF POE.

Ten years after Edgar A. Poe's death, a reaction in his favor set in, beginning with Mrs. Whitman's graceful little book, *Edgar Poe and his Critics*. This reaction has culminated in the biography now under consideration. Like Mr. William F. Gill, and others we could name, Mr. Ingram became fascinated by the strange and romantic career of the author of "The Raven." Fascination soon became infatuation; and for nearly ten years he devoted money, time, and labor to collecting material for a biography, which should have the same effect upon the other biographies of Poe as Aaron's rod had upon the rods of the Egyptians.

In his preface, Mr. Ingram makes the sweeping charge that all the biographies of Poe that have appeared since his vindictory memoir in 1874—except one "based upon Griswold's sketch"—have "reproduced the whole of his (Ingram's) material, and with scarcely an additional item of interest or value." Yet,

The Poe Cult

notwithstanding this, he quotes many interesting passages from biographies of Poe which have appeared *since 1874*; in some instances giving credit, in others not. In common justice he should have given credit to the biographer who discovered and rescued Poe's remarkable letter about the "tame propriety" of Washington Irving's style, which Mr. Ingram copies in full on p. 154, Vol. 1, of his work.

Poe required no ancestors. His genius has thrown distinction upon a name which, otherwise, would long ere this have passed into oblivion. It was not necessary, therefore, for Mr. Ingram to claim that the grandfather of the poet "greatly distinguished himself during the War of Independence." Even were such the fact, it would add nothing to Edgar Poe's reputation. But such was *not* the fact. The grandfather of Edgar Poe, called by courtesy Gen. Poe, was simply deputy quartermaster of the Maryland Line during the American Revolution. He performed his duty well and faithfully, but it was not a position which gave him an opportunity to "distinguish" himself.

The admirers of Poe will read with interest and pleasure Mr. Ingram's story of the romantic love affair between Mrs. Whitman and the poet. It is the fullest and most satisfactory account of what has hitherto been a mys-

The Poe Cult

terious episode in Poe's career. His letters to his "promised bride" during the period of their brief engagement are replete with expressions of the most exalted passion and the most enthusiastic devotion. The breaking off of the engagement is thus told by Mr. Ingram:

"He arrived in Providence full of the most sanguine hopes; he had proposed to himself a career of literary success, dwelling with enkindling enthusiasm upon his long-cherished scheme of establishing a magazine that should give him supreme control of intellectual society in America. His dreams of love and triumph were rapidly destroyed. In a few days he was to be married; he had advised his aunt, Mrs. Clemm, to expect his and his bride's arrival in New York early the following week, when information was given to Mrs. Whitman and to her relatives that he had violated the solemn pledge of abstinence so recently given. Whether this information was true, no one living, perchance, can say. When he arrived at the dwelling of Mrs. Whitman, "no token of the infringement of his promise was visible in his appearance or manner," said that lady, "but I was at last convinced that it would be in vain longer to hope against hope. I knew that he had irrevocably lost the power of self-recovery. . . ."

This scene is certainly highly dramatic, and is a fit termination of so wild and romantic a love affair. Poe never knew the real cause of the rupture of the engagement, and, "up to the time of his death does not appear to have alluded to Mrs. Whitman again save in the most conventional manner, but the lady always cherished, with unfaded affection, the memory of her connection with the poet; and invariably contrived to bring more prominently forward the brighter traits of her hero's character than has been accomplished by any other person."

We admire Mr. Ingram's industry in getting the hitherto unpublished letters of Poe; some of them throw light on the complex character of this strange being, who, as was said of John Randolph, of Roanoke, "lived and died a mystery to those who knew him best." We must, however, question the taste and propriety of resurrecting the unsavory controversy between Poe and English. The whole affair was disgraceful, and reflected credit on neither. A biographer should know what to blot. The work of even the greatest writer is not *all* interesting. We have no doubt that Shakespeare's writing desk, if he had one, contained much that was consigned to well-merited oblivion. When we read of Poe taking

credit to himself for “running his pen through certain sentences referring to the brandy nose of Mr. Briggs (since Mr. Briggs is only one-third described when this nose is omitted), and to the family resemblance between the noble visage of Mr. English and that of the best looking but most unprincipled of Mr. Barnum’s baboons,” we feel that Poe has done himself infinitely more harm than he has done either Mr. Briggs or Mr. English by indulging in language that should be confined to Billingsgate, where they “sell the best fish and speak the worst English.”

We will not stop to point out several unimportant errors made by Mr. Ingram, but we have to condemn the ungenerous spirit that prompted him to omit all mention of Mr. Gill from the work. The latter has done very worthy, if Quixotic, service in the Poe cause. We are afraid that Mr. Ingram is a little bit jealous of what others have done in this matter; that, like the Turk, he wishes to reign alone, and will not permit anyone else to share his self-assumed throne.

WOODBERRY'S LIFE OF POE.

The interest in the strange and romantic story of Poe's life seems to increase rather than diminish. Already nine lives have been given to the world—some written by bitter enemies, others by injudicious friends, all wanting, more or less, in that calm, dispassionate tone which should characterize works of literary and historical interest. A tenth life of Poe has been written by Mr. George E. Woodberry, for the American Men of Letters series. In a compact volume of three hundred and fifty pages, we have a complete, reliable and interesting life of the author of *The Raven*, written with absolute literary candor and entirely free from prejudice, one way or the other. In fact, he has produced a work which should satisfy all readers for a long time to come.

Mr. Woodberry has anticipated the possible cavils of the critics by carefully substantiating, as far as possible, the fresh and interesting information which he has added to what was already known of Poe's romantic and erratic

career. The fact of his enlisting in the United States Army has been hinted at before, but Mr. Woodberry proves by the records of the war department that Poe enlisted on the 26th of May, 1828, and served for nearly twelve months, being discharged on the 15th of April, 1829, his friends having put a substitute in his place with a view of getting him appointed a cadet to West Point. Mr. Woodberry has thus filled up a gap in Poe's life which had baffled all other biographers of the poet.

One of the most disagreeable accusations brought against the dead Poe by Griswold was, that while Poe was the editor of the Gentleman's Magazine, of which William E. Burton, the comedian, was the owner, he had taken advantage of the latter's temporary absence to supplant him by starting a new magazine, and had obtained transcripts of the subscription and account books for that purpose. When Burton returned home, at the end of a fortnight, he was told that not a line of copy for the next number of the magazine had been given to the printers, and after some time Poe was found late in the evening at one of his accustomed haunts and was thus addressed: "Mr. Poe, I am astonished. Give me my manuscript, so that I can attend to the

duties which you have so shamefully neglected, and when you are sober we will settle." To which Poe is reported to have replied: "Who are you that presumes to address me in this manner? Burton, I am the editor of the Penn Magazine, and you are (hiccup) a fool." Of course, this ended his relations with the Gentleman's.

Such is Griswold's story, which is now known to be false in every particular. Poe himself in a letter written to Dr. Joseph E. Snodgrass, editor of the Baltimore *Saturday Visitor*, says that he left the Gentleman's Magazine because he disapproved of Burton's conduct in the matter of certain prizes offered for manuscripts. They quarreled and separated. Poe in his letter to Dr. Snodgrass, dated Philadelphia, April 1, 1841, explaining the cause of his leaving Burton, says: "I pledge you before God the solemn word of a gentleman, that I am temperate even to rigor. From the hour in which I first saw this beast of calumniators to the hour in which I retired from his office in uncontrollable disgust at his chicanery, arrogance, ignorance, and brutality, nothing stronger than water ever passed my lips. You will never be brought to believe that I could write what I daily write, as I write it, were I as this man would induce those

who know me not to believe. At no period of my life was I ever what men call intemperate. I was never in the habit of intoxication. I never drunk drams, etc., but for a brief period, while I resided in Richmond and edited the *Messenger*, I certainly did give way, at long intervals, to the temptation held out on all sides by the spirit of Southern conviviality. My sensitive temperament could not stand an excitement which was an every-day matter to my companions. In short, it sometimes happened that I was completely intoxicated. For some days after each excess I was invariably confined to bed. But it is now quite four years since I have abandoned every kind of alcoholic drink—four years with the exception of a single deviation, which occurred shortly after my leaving Burton, and when I was induced to resort to the occasional use of cider, with the hope of relieving a nervous attack. You will thus see, frankly stated, the whole amount of my sin."

Mr. Woodberry has done a good work by rescuing this important correspondence from the columns of a daily newspaper and giving it a permanent place in American literary biography.

For nearly a quarter of a century after Poe's untimely death, Griswold's infamous memoir

The Poe Cult

was accepted by the world as correct, and followed by other biographers until 1875, when the erection of the monument over the poet's long-neglected grave in Baltimore led to a new investigation of his life. This, continued to the present time, has resulted in the complete refutation of all of Griswold's slanders and the bringing to light, from time to time, of important facts, affecting Poe as a man and a poet, until, as we have before remarked, the whole story of his life has been related in Mr. Woodberry's work.

Poe has had a singular literary fate; long neglected by his own countrymen, the English, French and German critics recognized him as the most original of all the American poets.

RECENT BIOGRAPHIES OF EDGAR A. POE.*

When Dr. Johnson heard that Boswell intended to write his life, he is reported to have said that he would prevent so great a calamity by taking the life of his presumptive biographer. In this matter, as, indeed, in many others, Johnson was wrong. Those profound philosophical works, by which he hoped to be long remembered, are not now read by one in ten thousand, but Boswell's biography will keep alive an interest in Johnson to the most distant posterity. Had Edgar A. Poe known how Griswold would write his life, he might more justly have entertained the murderous feeling attributed to Dr. Johnson. Yet Griswold's memoir of Poe has been an advantage to the poet. Had he written a truthful and satisfactory biography, it would have been accepted as such by the world, and perhaps long since have been consigned to the neglected shelves of public and private li-

*International Review, January, 1881.

The Poe Cult

braries; but the manifest injustice of Griswold's sketch induced the friends and admirers of Poe to examine his biographer's damaging statements, to sweep away the falsehood from his disgraceful stories, and to give to the world all the strange and remarkable incidents which made the life of the author of "The Raven" more romantic than fiction.

Carlyle says that "a well-written life is almost as rare as a well-spent one." Eight lives of Poe have been published. That so many biographies should be written of one author is a very noticeable circumstance. Byron, who occupied the attention of the world more than any other modern writer, had only three or four biographies written of him; Dickens, the most popular author of the last century, has had only two or three; Bulwer has had none; Bryant, one; Irving, two; Halleck, one; Moore, one, and Thackeray, if we except one or two imperfect sketches and the execrable stuff published by Anthony Trollope, has had none.

We propose in this article to examine two recent lives of Poe. Mr. Gill's book was written with a twofold object—the deification of Poe and the damnation of Griswold. It is hard to say which feeling predominates. For

The Poe Cult

our own part, we do not believe that Poe was so good as Gill represents him or that Griswold was so bad. Mr. Gill claims that his is the most complete life of Poe that has been published. He begins his life by a sketch of Poe's imaginary Italian ancestry, which the late Sarah Helen Whitman *invented*, and first published in her "Poe and his Critics." In a letter written to me by Mrs. Whitman the year before her death, she says: "For all I said on the subject I *alone* am responsible. A distant relative of mine, a descendant, like myself, of Nicholas Le Poér, had long ministered to my genealogical proclivities by stories which, from my childhood, had vaguely haunted and charmed my imagination. When I discovered certain facts in Poe's history, of which he had previously made little account, he seemed greatly impressed by my theory of our relationship. Of course, I endowed him with my traditional heirlooms. An aptitude for genealogical researches is my specialty, and it would require but a few slender links to connect your Franco-Italian name with that Didier King of Lombardy, who surrendered his Iron crown to Charlemagne and gave him his daughter in marriage."

So much for Poe's "long descent." But he could well afford to be the first of his name; he

The Poe Cult

did not require ancestors, coats of arms, or coronets. We seek not for ancestors, immediate or remote, of Shakespeare, Dante, or Virgil; they have crowned their names with a lustre which kings cannot bestow.

Mr. Gill is guilty of some mistakes which should be corrected. Edgar Poe's father was not the *fourth*, but the *eldest* son of his parents. It was not *after* the breach between Poe and Mr. Allan that the latter married his second wife: it was before; the marriage was the cause of the quarrel. Poe did not utter on his deathbed the nonsense about "the Elysian bowers of the undiscovered spirit world"—Judge Neilson Poe, his nearest living relative, who was present at the death of his cousin, says: "He was taken in a dying condition to the University Hospital, where he remained insensible to the last."

We regret that we cannot truthfully praise Mr. Gill's literary style. In mentioning the simple fact that Poe printed "The Raven" anonymously, he thus expresses himself: "When in his silent vigils, enthralled by the imaginative ecstasy which often possessed and over-powered him, he conceived and wrought out this marvelous inspiration, what wonder is it that his delicate sensibility should prompt him to conceal from the rude gaze of his material

The Poe Cult

audience the secret springs of his inner consciousness, by printing his *chef-d'œuvre* over an assumed name, and hedging its origin about with the impenetrable veil of fiction?" In an elaborate analysis of the same poem, Mr. Gill indulges in the following language: "Postulating the opinion which we venture to advance here upon the result of a process of psychological introversion, which conclusion is confirmed by several of Poe's most intimate acquaintances now living, strengthened by a chain of conclusive circumstantial evidence, we have arrived at a theory of the origin of the poem that has received the approval of, etc." Here is a still higher flight: "That some of the most exquisite imaginative fabrics ever constructed have been wrought from the suggestions afforded by some especial experience, or by a chance incident of circumstance, there are many familiar examples to demonstrate." When stripped of its covering of verbiage, this means simply that authors frequently write from their own experience—a truism which will scarcely be denied.

Mr. Gill's grammar is not always as Cæsar's wife was required to be, above suspicion. In fact, he sometimes lapses into such mistakes as these: "Some of his best prose tales were *done* at this time, when the yoke of privation

The Poe Cult

sat but lightly upon his shoulders.” In speaking of Poe’s reading of “The Raven,” he says, “He was too good an elocutionist to fail to adequately *voice* his conceptions.” Again: “By matter-of-fact minds, incapable of *sensing* delicate distinctions, poets, from Shakespeare down, have been, and will continue to be, adjudged guilty of arrant plagiarism.” It is a pity that Mr. Gill does not know the “delicate distinction” between a verb and a noun.

We mark these errors in no unkind spirit, but we think it is the critic’s duty to discover and expose faults more than to praise beauties. We thank Mr. Gill for giving us the severe criticism which Poe wrote upon Griswold’s “Poets and Poetry of America.” This was the secret cause of Griswold’s enmity. He nursed his anger for ten years, and, when Poe was helpless in his grave, vilified the character of the deceased under the guise of friendship. Poe certainly handled Griswold’s book without gloves. He called it “miserable” and its authory “a toady;” he declared that “reasoning and thinking were entirely out of Griswold’s sphere,” etc. With prophetic ken, Poe declared at the close of the article that Griswold would be “forgotten, save only by those whom he had injured and insulted; he will sink into oblivion, without leaving a landmark

The Poe Cult

to tell that he once existed; or, if he is spoken of hereafter, he will be quoted as the *unfaithful servant who abused his trust.*"

Entertaining as Poe's criticisms always are, still we think that an original genius, capable of producing so remarkable a poem as "The Raven," is better employed in affording subjects for criticism than in acting as a critic himself. Dunces have to be scourged, the literary temple has to be swept clean; but such work belongs not to a poet of exquisite genius. We do not cut blocks with a razor; we should not put Pegasus under the saddle. Goldsmith was a fine critic, yet who reads his criticisms now? But his "Traveller," his "Deserted Village," his "Vicar of Wakefield," are immortal. Tennyson might have written admirable criticism of poetry, but the world would not have taken it in fair exchange for "In Memoriam," "The Princess," and "The Idyls of the King." Wordsworth calls criticism an "inglorious employment," and adds: "If the time consumed in writing critiques on the works of others were given to original composition, it would be much better employed." We take the liberty of differing from this opinion, thinking on the contrary, that criticism is a most important department of letters, and of infinite value to literature. Goethe was a

The Poe Cult

critic, Sainte-Beuve was a critic, Macaulay was a critic, Matthew Arnold is a critic. Surely their “employment” was not “in-glorious.” But we do think that a writer of Poe’s peculiar gifts should have been much better employed in original composition than in writing criticisms, however brilliant. The following passage will show how Poe’s ability in this department was appreciated in his lifetime by one of the most fastidious of American scholars—Horace Binney Wallace:

“As an analytical critic, Poe possessed abilities quite unrivalled in this country, and perhaps on the other side of the water. We have scarcely ever taken up one of his more critical papers on some author or work worthy of his strength, without a sense of surprise at the novel and profound views from which his inquiries began, nor followed their development without the closest interest, nor laid the essay down without admiration and respect for the masculine and acute understanding with which we had coped during the perusal.”

While according such high praise to Poe’s critical abilities, Mr. Wallace adds that, “in the case of inventive genius so brilliant and vigorous as shown in his poems, we feel that criticism, even of the highest kind, is an employment below the true measure of its dignity,

The Poe Cult

and, we may say, its duty; for to be a tender of a light in another man's tomb is not fit occupation for one whose ray may abide against all the fears of night and storm and time. Poe possessed unusual powers of close logical reasoning; he was gifted with a miraculous power of sarcasm, and to him the *torva voluptas* of literary controversy possessed a fatal fascination."

While lamenting that Poe did not develop more fully his unrivalled gifts in original composition, we must remember that during all his later life he was a sufferer from *res angusta domi*, and whatever found the readiest market was what he was compelled to produce. He could not enjoy the luxury of devoting his genius to the composition of such poems as "The Raven," which paid him ten dollars, when a criticism like that on "Flaccus," which he could dash off *currente calamo*, paid him fifteen dollars.

Poetry occupied very little of Poe's intellectual life: it was for him but a "divine plaything," as Heine said of himself. Poe's poems were attempts to represent in verse the beautiful and unearthly beings whom his soul worshipped. In speaking of Maurice de Guerin, Matthew Arnold's says: "To a nature like his, endowed with a passion for perfection, the

necessity to produce constantly, to produce whether in the vein, to produce something good or bad or middling as it may happen, but at all events *something*, is the most intolerable of tortures." It was his passion for perfection, his disdain for all imperfect poetical work, which made Poe so severe a critic.

Mr. Gill devotes the greater part of his appendix to an account of the proceedings attending the unveiling of the Poe Monument in Baltimore in November, 1875. We must condemn his bad taste in quoting from the contemporary account of the ceremonial such passages as these: "Mr. William F. Gill, who has done much by his written vindication of the poet's memory to remove false impressions, gave the finest rendition of "The Raven" to which we have ever listened. The large audience was spellbound by his perfect elocution, and his resemblance to the recognized ideals of Mr. Poe himself made the personation of his horror and despair almost painful." We were present on this occasion, but we saw no person "spellbound." We have seen every likeness of Poe extant, but we fail to discover any resemblance between the author of "The Raven" and Mr. Gill. Again he quotes: "After the monument was unveiled, 'Annabel Lee' was recited in the same masterly manner

The Poe Cult

by Mr. Gill." Further on he says: "Poe's famous poem, "The Raven," was read by Mr. Gill, who was made the recipient of an ovation at its close at the hands of the audience." Our presence at the time does not enable us clearly to understand what he means by "an ovation at the hands of the audience."

The melancholy life and death of the unhappy master of "The Raven" seem to have thrown a spell over all his later biographers, especially those who did not know him in life. In their endeavor to present him to the world in the most favorable light, they have not been satisfied to represent him under the form of a cloud with a silver lining, but almost as a resplendent sun. If this be right, then the present writer is wrong. But Mr. Gill stands *facile princeps* in this particular. He set out with the fixed determination to whiten Poe and blacken Griswold. Like the famous knight of La Mancha, he attacked all obstructions which stood in the way, and the result has been that those who knew Poe will scarcely recognize him as painted by Mr. Gill. Still, with all its faults, the work is interesting; but it would have been much more valuable had the material it contains been placed in the hands of a skilled literary man.

We now turn to Mr. Ingram's biography.



ELIZABETH POE,
Mother of the Poet.



To him belongs the credit of having produced the most elaborate and complete Life of Poe which has yet been given to the world. He details the poet's history from his birth in Boston in 1809, to his death in Baltimore in 1849.

Mr. Ingram has been very industrious in collecting the material for his work. He has gathered all facts obtainable; but he has written his biography in a spirit of childish admiration of Poe, and determined hostility toward all other biographers of the poet. He seems to labor under the delusion that Americans neither appreciated the genius nor knew anything about the life of Poe until he kindly enlightened them. Carlyle says the fact that, a quarter of a century after his death, interest in Burns continued unabated proves that the poet was not a common man. Interest in Poe has not only not abated during the more than a quarter of a century which has elapsed since his death, but year after year it has continued to increase.

When Alexander set out at the age of twenty to conquer the world, he depended upon his sword, with hope for inspiration. When Edgar A. Poe set out at the age of twenty to win fame and fortune, he depended upon his pen. It was a brave act in those days of our country's literary poverty. The time

had passed when poets were the chosen companions of statesmen and princely merchants; the time had not arrived when literary men could live by their pens—yet Poe, with a knightly disdain of fear, rushed into the arena, choosing Sydney's brave motto, "*Aut viam inveniam aut faciam.*" Collecting his verses together, he published them under the name of "Tamerlane and Minor Poems," having previously sent specimens to John Neal, who, fifty years ago, was a prominent journalist. He was at that time the editor of the "Yankee," and replied to the aspiring young poet in the columns of his paper: "If E. A. P., of Baltimore, whose lines about heaven, which, although nonsense, are rather exquisite nonsense, would do himself justice, he might make a beautiful and, perhaps, a magnificent poem." The lines referred to are in "Fairy-Land." In response to this first recognition of his ability to do something, Poe wrote the following note:

"I am young, not yet twenty; am a poet, if deep worship of all beauty can make me one, and wish to be so in the common meaning of the word. I would give the world to embody one-half the ideas afloat in my imagination . . . I appeal to you as a man that loves the same beauty that I adore—the beauty of the natural blue sky and the sunshiny earth.

The Poe Cult

There can be no tie more strong than that of brother for brother. It is not so much that they love one another as that they both love the same parent; their affections are always running in the same direction, the same channel, and cannot help mingling. I am, and have been from my childhood, an idler. It cannot, therefore, be said that—

‘I left a calling for this idle trade,
A duty broke, a father disobeyed,’

for I have no father nor mother.”

It does not appear that Poe’s first literary venture attracted any attention or had any sale; yet the little volume contains thoughts and suggestions superior in point of imagination to anything in Byron’s early poems. Indeed, the delicate grace and musical rhythm of portions of “Tamerlane” give a promise of the metrical sweetness which distinguishes all Poe’s poetry.

The young poet soon discovered that the way of literature was far from being a “Primrose path;” that it led through thorns and briars, with but a few flowers to cheer the weary way. After ten years of literary struggle, we find him, in 1842, anxious to obtain a livelihood “independent of letters.” Poe had, by this time, made a national reputation by his writ-

ings. He had edited with distinguished success the "Southern Literary Messenger," the "Gentleman's Magazine," and "Graham's Magazine," he had written "The Fall of the House of Usher," "Ligeia," "William Wilson," the "Murders in the Rue Morgue," and other tales of mystery and imagination; he had published his best critical essays, and some of his sweetest lyrics—yet he writes this almost despairing letter to a friend, asking his assistance in securing a small government clerkship in Washington:

"I wish to God I could visit Washington. But the old story, you know—I have no money, not even enough to take me there, saying nothing of getting back. It is a hard thing to be poor, but as I am kept so by an honest motive, I dare not complain. Your suggestion about Mr. Kennedy is well timed; and here, Thomas, you can do me a true service. Call upon Mr. Kennedy—you know him, I believe; if not introduce yourself; he is a perfect gentleman, and will give you a cordial welcome. Speak to him of my wishes, and urge him to see the Secretary of War in my behalf, or one of the other Secretaries, or President Tyler. I mention, in particular, the Secretary of War, because I have been at West Point, and this may stand me in some stead. I would be glad

to get almost any appointment—even a \$500 one—so that I may have something independent of letters for a subsistence. To coin one's brain into silver, at the nod of a master, is, to my thinking, the hardest task in the world. Mr. Kennedy has been at all times a true friend to me—he was the first true friend I ever had; I am indebted to him *for life itself*. He will be willing to help me I know, but *needs urging*, for he is always head and ears in business. Thomas, may I depend upon you?"

It is not known what steps were taken to advance Poe's interest in this matter, but we know that he failed to secure "even a five-hundred-dollar" clerkship. Had he obtained a government appointment, it is not very likely that he would have kept it. He would have found the dull routine of official life even a harder task than "coining one's brain into silver, at the nod of a master;" and the nervous restlessness which he said haunted him as a fiend, would have driven him back to literature as a relief.

In the Winter of 1845 the fame of Edgar A. Poe was established by the production of "The Raven." The almost universal verdict of the world has placed this among the famous single poems, like the "Elegy in a Country Church-yard," the "Deserted Village," etc. "The

"Raven" fixes the attention by its sad and mysterious story, its rich but sombre coloring, and by the almost miraculous melody of its rhythm. It seems wild and meaningless upon the first perusal, but we turn to it again and again, and our interest grows by what it feeds upon. Mr. James E. Murdock, the elocutionist, prefaced his reading of the poem by saying he knew Poe well, and from his conversations with the poet he understood that Lenore was intended to represent his happy and innocent youth, and The Raven his dark and unhappy manhood. Be this as it may, the informing spirit of the poem is:

"The rare and radiant maiden whom the angels named Lenore."

An ordinary versifier would have repeated this beautiful name continually. Poe was too consummate a literary artist for that: he produced a better effect by a "masterly frugality of repetition." In the second and fifth verses, by its "quick and sudden duplication" he fixes Lenore in the mind of the reader, and continually suggests it in all the other verses, until the poem closes with the despairing wail—

"And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating
on the floor
Shall be lifted—nevermore!"

The Poe Cult

It has been said, with equal truth and beauty, that on the dusky wings of the "Raven," Edgar A. Poe will sail securely over the gulf of oblivion to the eternal shore.

The increased reputation which followed the publication of "The Raven" stimulated Poe's literary activity. But, with all his fame and work, he still felt it hard to keep the wolf from the door with no other weapon than his pen. A few weeks after "The Raven" had made Poe the lion of the season, we find him writing in the "Broadway Journal" an article entitled, "Some Secrets of the Magazine Prison House," which "throws a lurid light upon the mysteries of the unfortunate poet's impecuniosity." In this mournful paper occurs the following paragraph:

"The want of an international copyright law by rendering it nearly impossible to obtain anything from the booksellers in the way of remuneration for literary labor, has had the effect of forcing many of our best writers into service of the magazines and reviews, which, with a pertinacity that does them credit, keep up in a certain or uncertain degree the good old saying that even in the thankless field of letters the laborer is worthy of his hire. How —by dint of what dogged instinct of the honest and proper—these journals have continued to

persist in their paying practices is a point we have had much difficulty in settling to our satisfaction, and we have been forced to settle it at last upon no more reasonable ground than that of a still lingering *esprit de patrie*. That magazines can live and not only live but thrive, and not only thrive but afford to disburse money for original contributions, are facts which can only be solved, under the circumstances, by the really fanciful but still agreeable supposition that there is somewhere still existing an ember not altogether quenched among the fires of good feeling for letters and literary men that once animated the American bosom. These magazine editors and proprietors *pay* (that is the word); and with your true poor-devil author the smallest favors are sure to be thankfully received. No; the illiberality lies at the door of the demagogue-ridden public, who suffer their anointed delegates (or perhaps aroynted, which is it?) to insult the common sense of them (the public) by making orations in our national halls on the beauty and conveniency of robbing the literary Europe on the highway, and on the gross absurdity in especial of admitting so unprincipled a principle that a man has any right and title either to his own brains or the flimsy material that he chooses to spin out of them, like a con-

The Poe Cult

founded caterpillar as he is. If anything of this gossamer character stands in need of protection, why, we have our hands full at once with the silkworms and the *morus multicaulis*."

Poe suffered as much as any author of his time from the want of an international copyright law between the United States and Great Britain. His tales were copied constantly into the English periodicals and translated into the French Journals. As to the effects of travel on literary wares, he says:

"It is astonishing to see how a magazine article, like a traveller, spruces up after crossing the sea. We ourselves have had the honor of being pirated without mercy; but as we found our articles improved by the process (at least in the opinion of our countrymen), we said nothing, as a matter of course. We have written paper after paper which attracted no attention at all until it appeared as original in Bentley's 'Miscellany' or the Paris 'Charivari.' The Boston 'Notion' (edited by Rufus W. Griswold) once abused us very lustily for having written 'The House of Usher.' Not long afterwards Bentley published it anonymously, as original with itself; whereupon 'The Notion,' having forgotten that we wrote it, not only lauded it *ad nauseam*, but copied it *in toto*."

The Poe Cult

We regret that Mr. Ingram should have violated good taste and decorum by entering into the disgraceful squabbles which embittered the last years of Poe's life. It would have been better had they been allowed to remain buried in the long forgotten journals in which they were first published. Whether Mr. English was thrashed or Mr. Briggs had a bottle-nose are questions about which the present and future generations of readers will care very little. Whether one man was a "vagabond" and another the "autocrat of all the asses" is something in which we are very slightly interested; but in Poe himself, both as a man and a poet, the world has an ever increasing interest. We think, therefore, that it will be a pleasure to read what Prof. Valentine, of Richmond, says of his personal appearance:

"His brow was fine and expressive, his eyes dark and restless; in the mouth, firmness mingled with an element of scorn and discontent. His gait was firm and erect, but his manner nervous and emphatic. He was of fine address and cordial in his intercourse with his friends, but looked as though he rarely smiled from joy, to which he seemed to be a stranger; that might be partly attributed to the great struggle for self-control in which he seemed

to be constantly engaged. There was little variation and much sadness in the intonation of his voice, yet this very sadness was so completely in harmony with his history as to excite on the part of this community a deep interest in him both as a lecturer and a reader."

The Spring of 1849 found Poe still struggling to make a living by literary work. He had been ill, and upon becoming convalescent, had lapsed into a melancholy state of mind, to which he now became habitually subject. He believed himself destined to an early death, but his haughty soul "defied all portents of impending doom." To an astonishing degree he retained his hope for the future even in the midst of his dreary present. Undaunted by the worst blows that "unmerciful disaster" inflicted upon him, he determined to struggle on and on, hoping against hope, or, if despairing, to follow the noble advice of Burke—"even in despair to work on." This determination is forcibly expressed in a letter, which about this time he wrote to "Annie," one of the most cherished friends of his lonesome later years:

"You know how cheerfully I wrote to you not long ago—about my prospects, hopes; how I anticipated soon being out of difficulty. Well! all seems to be frustrated, at least for the present. As usual, misfortune never comes single,

and I have met one disappointment after another. The 'Columbian' in the first place, failed; then 'Post's Union' (taking with it my principal dependence); then the 'Whig Review' was forced to stop paying for contributions; then the 'Democratic,' then (on account of his oppression and insolence) I was obliged to quarrel finally with——; and then, to crown all, the '——' (from which I anticipated so much, and with which I had made a regular engagement for ten dollars a week throughout the year) has written a circular to correspondents, pleading poverty, and declining to receive any more articles; more than this, the 'S. L. Messenger,' which owes me a great deal, cannot pay just yet; and, altogether, I am reduced to 'Sartain' and 'Graham'—both very precarious. No doubt, Annie, you attribute my 'gloom' to these events, but you would be wrong. It is not in the power of any merely *worldly* considerations, such as these, to depress me. . . . No; my sadness is *unaccountable*—and this makes me the more sad. I am full of dark forebodings. *Nothing* cheers or comforts me. My life seems wasted—the future looks a dreary blank; but I will struggle on, and 'hope against hope.' ”

In a few months the struggle ended, as we all know.

The Poe Cult

From a long and careful study of Poe's character, it does not appear that he was one of the most amiable of human beings; but at the same time it must in justice be admitted that he suffered more than the common lot from "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune." From his second to his eighteenth year, he lived in affluence, and was taught to consider himself the sole heir to a splendid fortune, when suddenly, without warning, he was thrown upon the world friendless and alone. When Tom Jones was turned out of the house of his adopted father, Squire All-worthy, the Squire gave him sufficient money to enable him to earn an honest livelihood, saying, "As I have educated you like a child of my own, I will not turn you naked into the world." Poe received no such treatment from his adopted father: he was dismissed penniless. The rest of his life was one continued struggle against poverty and want, at times without the simplest necessities of life. Conscious of possessing rare intellectual gifts, he saw himself often neglected by the world and condemned by men infinitely his inferiors in all things except worldly knowledge. It cannot be said of Poe that, like a block of marble, he became more polished and statue-like by every stroke of misfortune. On the contrary, he be-

The Poe Cult

came more defiant, desperate, reckless, but not more admirable. The companions of his boyhood and early youth unite in saying that he was a fine, generous and high-spirited nature, and attribute the change which took place in his character to the quarrel with Mr. Allan and its consequences. Some of his summer friends turned away from him, while others reproached him for ingratitude, not knowing the circumstances of the case. His proud and sensitive spirit keenly felt the sudden change from wealth to poverty, from social position to neglect; and then began that unequal battle with the world which ended in a charity hospital in Baltimore. Swift's epitaph should be Poe's; for does not he also sleep "*ubi saeva indignatio cor ulterius lacerare nequit*"?

THE TRUE STORY OF POE'S DEATH.

Sleep restfully after life's fevered dream!
Sleep wayward heart!

MRS. SARAH HELEN WHITMAN.

No American poet has attracted more attention, living and dead, than Edgar A. Poe. Nine lives of him have been written, yet about no celebrated writer of modern times has it been so difficult to get the real facts of his life and death. According to some of his biographers he mingled among men like a bewildered angel; while others describe him as a prying fiend, or an Ismaelite, with his hands against everyone and everyone's against him. The time and place of his birth were for many years uncertain; even now some of his biographers still differ as to that matter. The place of his burial was at one time undecided, but that was definitely settled, in 1875, when his remains were discovered in Westminster churchyard, Baltimore, and a monument seven and a half feet high erected over his grave. The cause of his death, and the circumstances

The Poe Cult

attending it, have not yet been definitely determined, and everything that throws any light upon the subject will prove interesting to his many admirers.

A former Baltimorean, now living in San Francisco, gives what he claims to be a true account of the poet's last days and death. This is his story: "I was an intimate associate of Edgar Allan Poe for years. Much that has been said and written regarding his death is false. His habitual resort in Baltimore was the Widow Meagher's place. This was an oyster-stand and liquor-bar on the city front, corresponding in some respects with the coffee houses of San Francisco. It was frequented much by printers, and ranked as a respectable place, where parties could enjoy a game of cards, or engage in social conversation. Poe was a great favorite with the old woman. His favorite seat was just behind the stand, and about as quiet and sociable as an oyster himself. He went by the name of 'Bard,' and when parties came into the shop, it was 'Bard, come up and take a nip;' or, 'Bard, come and take a hand in this game.'

"Whenever the Widow Meagher met with any incident or idea that tickled her fancy, she would ask the 'Bard' to versify it. Poe always complied, writing many a witty couplet,

The Poe Cult

and at times poems of some length. These verses, quite as meritorious as some by which his name was immortalized, were thus frittered into obscurity. It was in this little shop that Poe's attention was called to an advertisement in a Philadelphia paper of a prize for the best story; and it was there that he wrote his famous 'Gold Bug,' which carried off the hundred dollar prize. [Incorrect.]

"Poe had been shifting for several years between Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York. He had been away from Baltimore for three or four months, when he turned up one evening at the Widow Meagher's. I was there when he came in. He privately told me that he had been to Richmond, and was on his way North to get ready for his wedding. It was drinking all around and repeat, until the crowd was pretty jolly. It was the night before election, and four of us, including Poe, started uptown. We had not gone half a dozen squares when we were nabbed by a gang of men who were on the lookout for voters to 'coop.' It was the practice in those days to seize people, whether drunk or sober, lock them up until the polls were opened, and then march them around to every precinct, where they were made to vote the ticket of the party that controlled the coop. Our coop was in the rear of an engine

The Poe Cult

house on Calvert Street. It was part of the game to stupefy the prisoners with drugged liquor. Well, the next day, we were voted at thirty-one different places, and over and over, it being as much a man's life was worth to rebel. Poe was so badly drugged that after he was carried on two or three different rounds, the gang said it was no use to vote a dead man any longer, so they shoved him into a cab and sent him to a hospital to get him out of the way.

"The commonly accepted story that Poe died from the effects of dissipation is all bosh. It was nothing of the kind. He died from laudanum, or some other poison, that was forced upon him in the coop. He was in a dying condition while he was being voted around the city. The story by Griswold of Poe's having been on a week's spree and being picked up on the street is false. I saw him shoved into the cab myself, and he told me he had just arrived in the city."

The above narrative will form an interesting chapter in the life and death of the poet whose life was a romance and whose death was a tragedy. The account of Poe's last days agrees in several respects with the account which the late Chief Judge Neilson Poe, of Baltimore, gave to the present writer. It's

The Poe Cult

painful to think that a man of Poe's wonderful genius should, after a life of intolerable misery, die in the wretched manner above described. But, it must now be admitted that the author of the *Raven* was "cooped" and drugged to death by political roughs, who used the hapless poet as a "repeater" at a local election. Others have vaguely stated this before, and the detailed account now given by one who was with Poe at the time confirms the horrible story.

THE GRAVE OF POE.*

It was on a cold, dull and dreary day, in the Winter of 1871, while attending the funeral of Mrs. Maria Clemm, the aunt and mother-in-law of Edgar A. Poe, that I first saw the nameless grave of that gifted but most unfortunate poet. She died the day before, and her last request was to be buried by the side of her "darling Eddie," in Westminster churchyard, corner of Fayette and Greene Streets, Baltimore. No stone has ever marked the place of his burial, though, shortly after his death, a marble was prepared, which was accidentally broken in the stonecutter's shop, only a few days before it was to be erected. It bore the following inscription:

"HIC
TANDEM FELICIS
CONDUNTUR RELIQUIAE
EDGARI ALLAN POE.
OBIIT OCT. 7, 1849,
AET 40.

*Appleton's Journal, January 27, 1872.

*Several statements in this article I have since discovered were incorrect

The Poe Cult

“Hic tandem felicis!” Here at last he is happy!

Can anything be more beautifully pathetic? Here, misguided child of genius, victim of want, of disappointment, and of thy own fiery passions, thou didst find that peace which was denied thee during life!

In my conversations with Mrs. Clemm, she gave me many interesting facts about Poe's personal appearance, his dress, etc. He was five feet eight and a quarter inches high; slightly but elegantly formed; his eyes were dark gray, almond-shaped, with long black lashes; his forehead was broad, massive, and white; his mouth and teeth were beautiful; he wore a long but not heavy mustache; his hair was dark brown, almost black, and curly; his feet and hands small as a woman's. He was very neat—even fastidious—about his dress; was fond of gray clothes; he always wore a turndown collar and black cravat.

His custom was to walk up and down his library when engaged in literary composition. He never sat down to write until he had arranged the plot, the characters, and even the language he was to use. To this may be attributed the extraordinary finish which his compositions display.

The true story of Poe's death has never

been correctly told. It is this: In the Summer of 1849, he left New York for Virginia. In Richmond he met Mrs. Elmira Shelton, whom he had known in his youth, renewed his acquaintance, and in a few weeks they were engaged to be married. He wrote to his friends in the North that he should pass the remainder of his life in Virginia, where the happiest days of his youth had been spent. Early in October he set out from Richmond to fulfill a literary engagement in New York, and to prepare for his marriage, which was to take place on the 17th of the month. Arriving in Baltimore, he found that he had missed the Philadelphia train which he expected to take, and would have to wait two or three hours for the next train. He went to a restaurant near the depot to get some refreshments. There he met some of his old West Point friends, who invited him to a champagne supper that night. He accepted the invitation, and went. At first he refused to drink, but at last he was induced to take a glass of champagne. That set him off, and in a few hours he was madly drunk. In this state he wandered off from his friends, was robbed and beaten by ruffians, and left insensible in the street all night. The next morning he was picked up and taken to the Washington Hospital. He was delirious with brain

The Poe Cult

fever. He was well cared for by the physicians of the Hospital, but he was beyond the skill of doctors. He lingered two or three days, and died on Sunday, October 7, 1849. The above was told me by Mrs. Clemm.

Washington Irving sweetly says of the grave: "It buries every error, covers every defect, extinguishes every resentment. From its peaceful bosom springs none but fond regrets and tender recollections. Who can look down upon the grave even of an enemy, and feel not a compunctionous throb that he should ever have warred with the poor handful of dust that lies mouldering before him!"

Let us, then, forget the errors of Edgar Poe, remembering the lines of Stoddard:

"He lies in dust, and the stone is rolled
Over the sepulchre dim and cold;
He has cancelled all he has done or said,
And gone to the dear and holy dead.
Let us forget the path he trod,
And leave him now to his Maker, God!"

THE POE MONUMENT.

For a quarter of a century the author of "The Raven" has been sleeping in the quiet graveyard attached to Westminster church, in the city of Baltimore. Among the beautiful monuments which adorn the fair Monumental City, not even the humblest has been reared in honor of him whose genius the world delights to honor. Baltimore has commemorated the patriot, the soldier, the mechanic; but her most gifted son has hitherto been neglected—as no stone has ever marked the hallowed spot where genius reposes. Strangers have come from distant lands to visit the grave of Poe as to a pilgrim's shrine. They anticipated no difficulty in finding the grave of so distinguished a poet; they expected to be guided to the spot by a suitable monument, and to meet there other admirers of Poe, bending in respect and reverence, perchance plucking a flower, a leaf, a twig, from the well-kept grave. Great has been the astonishment of these distant travellers, when, after much inquiry and diligent search, they at last found the grave of Edgar



EDGAR ALLAN POE MONUMENT, BALTIMORE.
(*Unveiled Nov. 17, 1875.*)

The Poe Cult

A. Poe—a wretched, forlorn, forsaken spot, in an obscure corner of an obscure churchyard. Rank weeds cover the neglected mound—but none of the violets and roses and pansies which the poet loved.

Such for more than twenty-five years was the last resting place of Edgar A. Poe, until the 17th of November, 1875, when the monument in honor of the poet was dedicated. In striking contrast with this interesting occasion was the scant ceremony, on the dreary Autumn afternoon, twenty-six years before, when the mortal remains of the author of the *Raven* were privately buried among his ancestors in Westminster churchyard. On the 8th of October, 1849, a single carriage followed the poet's body to the grave. On the 17th of November, 1875, the Poe monument was unveiled in the presence of an immense assemblage representing the wealth and culture of Baltimore. The ceremonies began with the performance of the "Pilgrim's Chorus," of Verdi, by the Philharmonic Society; followed by a history of the movement which culminated in the erection of the monument. Upon the conclusion of this address, Miss Sara Sigourney Rice, professor of elocution of the Western Female High School of Baltimore, read the letters received from the poets and other distinguished persons

The Poe Cult

who were invited to be present at the unveiling. The orator of the occasion, Prof. Henry E. Shepherd, at that time the Superintendent of Public Instruction in Baltimore, then delivered a scholarly address upon the Character and Literary Genius of Poe, in which he said that in him literary culture and artistic taste were combined with poetic genius, producing the richest and rarest results that any poet in the century had done, and, in those remarkable productions of his genius, the "Raven" and "Annabel Lee," he attained a graceful mastery over the subtle and delicate metrical forms, even those to whose successful production the spirit of the English tongue is not congenial. After alluding to the frequent tributes to Poe's genius which had appeared in leading British periodicals, the orator went on to say that this "lofty estimate of his powers is not confined to those lands in which the English language is the vernacular speech; it has extended into foreign climes, and aroused appreciative admiration where English literature is imperfectly known and slightly regarded."

Then followed some personal reminiscences of Poe by Mr. John H. B. Latrobe, a distinguished lawyer of Baltimore. He said: About the year 1832 there was a newspaper in Baltimore called *The Saturday Visitor*. One

The Poe Cult

of its efforts was to procure original tales, and to this end it offered on this occasion two prizes, one for the best story, and the other for the best short poem—\$100 for the first, and \$50 for the last. The judges appointed by the editor of the *Visitor* were the late John P. Kennedy, Dr. James H. Miller, also deceased, and myself; and accordingly we met, one pleasant afternoon in October, 1833. As I happened to be the youngest of the three, I was requested to open the packages of poetry and prose, respectively, and read the contents. Alongside of me was a basket to hold what we might reject. Most of the manuscripts were namby-pamby in the extreme, and the committee had about made up their minds that there was nothing to which they could award a prize, when I noticed a small quarto bound book that had, until then, accidentally escaped attention, possibly because so unlike externally the bundles of manuscripts it was to compete with. Opening it, an envelope with a motto corresponding with one in the book appeared, and we found that our prose examination was still incomplete. Instead of the common manuscript, the writing was in Roman characters—an imitation. As I read we all became deeply interested, and I was constantly interrupted by such exclamations as "Capital, "excellent,"

The Poe Cult

“how odd,” and the like. There was genius in every line, there was no uncertain grammar, no feeble phraseology; no ill-placed punctuation, no worn-out truisms, no strong thought elaborated into weakness. Logic and imagination were combined in rare consistency. When the reading was completed, there was a difference of choice; but finally the committee selected “A Manuscript found in a Bottle.” One of the series was called “A Descent into the Maelstrom,” and this was at one time preferred. There must have been six or eight tales in all. The statement in Dr. Griswold’s life prefixed to the common edition of Poe’s works, that “it was unanimously decided by the committee that the prize should be given to the first of geniuses who had written legibly—not another manuscript was unfolded,” is absolutely untrue. The selection being made, and the \$100 prize awarded because of the unquestionable genius and great originality of the writer, we were at liberty to open the envelope that identified him, and there we found, in the note whose motto corresponded with that on the little volume, the name of Edgar A. Poe.

Mr. Poe called at my office the following Monday to thank me, as one of the committee, for the award in his favor. I asked him then if he was occupied with any literary labor.

The Poe Cult

He replied that he was engaged in a voyage to the moon! and at once began to describe the journey with so much animation that for all that I now remember, I may have fancied myself the companion of his aerial journey. When he had finished his description, he apologized for his excitability, which he laughed at himself. Dr. Griswold's statement "that Mr. Kennedy accompanied Poe to a clothing store and purchased for him a respectable suit, with a change of linen, and sent him to a bath" is a sheer fabrication. I never saw Poe again.

At the close of Mr. Latrobe's address the assemblage withdrew from the hall and went to the churchyard, where the interesting ceremony of unveiling the Monument took place. This was performed by Miss Sara S. Rice, who, from first to last, had taken the most active interest in the erection of the monument. She was assisted by the ladies who took part in the first literary entertainment in aid of the Poe Monument Association, in the Autumn of 1865. As the drapery gracefully fell from the marble, the Philharmonic Society of Baltimore, composed of one hundred of the best singers in the city, chanted a dirge which had been composed for the occasion by Mrs. Eleanor A. Fullerton.

The dirge was listened to in silence, and with

The Poe Cult

bowed heads, by the immense assemblage. As the voices died away, Mrs. James A. Oates, who was then performing at Ford's Opera House, and in behalf of the joint companies of the theatres of Baltimore, placed a magnificent crown on the top of the monument.

The monument is made of the purest white marble from Maryland quarries. It stands upon a granite base about eight feet high, and is placed over the poet's grave in the most conspicuous corner of the cemetery. The monument is simple and chaste, having few ornaments. It recalls in some respects the monument to Shakespeare, recently erected at Victoria Park, Bath, England, though it is superior to this, however, in the simplicity of its design. It also bears a resemblance to the Wordsworth monument at Grasmere, England. It has on one side a finely executed medallion bust of the poet, taken from a photograph copy of an original daguerreotype. It is said to be an excellent likeness. Beneath the bust is inscribed the name, "Edgar Allan Poe." On the opposite side is the following inscription:

Born January 19th, 1809.
Died October 7th, 1849.

PORTRAITS OF POE.

One of Mrs. Whitman's most striking poems was inspired by a portrait of Edgar A. Poe, received many years after the death of the poet:

Slowly I raised the purple folds concealing
That face, magnetic as the morning's beam
While slumbering memory thrilled at its revealing,
Like Memnon waking from his marble dream.

Again I saw the brow's translucent pallor,
The dark hair floating o'er it like a plume;
The sweet imperious mouth, whose haughty valor
Defied all portents of impending doom.

The eyes of her poet-lover made an indelible impression upon her mind and heart, and twenty-five years after their sad separation, in recalling the poetic beauty of his face, she thus described them:

Eyes planet calm, with something in their vision
That seemed not of earth's mortal mixture born;
Strange mythic faiths and fantasies Elysian,
And far, sweet dreams of "fairy lands forlorn."

The Poe Cult

Unfathomable eyes that held the sorrow
Of vanished ages in their shadowy deeps,
Lit by that prescience of a heavenly morrow
Which in high hearts the immortal spirit keeps.

Sweet mournful eyes, long closed upon earth's sorrow,
Sleep restfully after life's fevered dream!
Sleep, wayward heart; till on some cool, bright
morrow,
Thy soul, refreshed, shall bathe in morning's beam.

The picture that inspired these remarkable verses was taken at Providence, R. I., at the time of Poe's engagement to Mrs. Whitman. It represents the poet in the full maturity of his manly beauty, before his fine mobile mouth had become disfigured by the habitual sneer which so plainly marked his "lonesome latter years." One of the last pictures of the author of the *Raven*, of which the vignette upon the title page of Mr. E. C. Stedman's dainty little work, "Edgar Allan Poe," is a reduced copy, was from a daguerreotype of the poet, owned by Dr. H. S. Cornwell, of New London, Conn., who thus describes it: "The aspect is one of mental misery, bordering on wildness, disdain of human sympathy, and scornful intellectual superiority. There is also in it, I think, dread of imminent calamity, coupled with despair and defiance, as of a hunted soul at bay."

Mr. Stedman, whose brochure on Poe, as revised and corrected from the *Scribner Monthly* article, is one of the finest and most appreciative critiques on the life and genius of the poet that has ever been written, devotes considerable attention to his portraits, and thus characterizes the man from his early and later pictures:

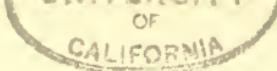
Even as we drive out of mind the popular conceptions of his nature, and look only at the portraits of him in the flesh, we needs must pause and contemplate, thoughtfully, and with renewed feeling, one of the marked ideal faces that seem—like those of Byron, De Musset, Heine—to fulfill all the traditions of genius, of picturesqueness, of literary and romantic effect.

We see one they describe as slight but erect of figure, athletic and well molded, of middle height, but so proportioned as to seem every inch a man; his forehead and temples large and not unlike those of Bonaparte; his hands fair as a woman's—in all, a graceful, well-dressed gentleman—one, even in the garb of poverty, "with gentleman written all over him." We see the handsome, intellectual face, the dark and clustering hair, the clear and sad eyes, large, lustrous, glowing with expression—the mouth, whose smile at least was sweet and

winning. We imagine the soft, musical voice (a delicate thing in man or woman), the easy, quiet movement, the bearing that no failure could humble. And this man had not only the gift of beauty—but the passionate love of beauty—either of which may be as great a blessing or peril as can befall a human being stretched upon the rack of this tough world.

But look at some daguerreotype taken shortly before his death, and it is like an inauspicious mirror, that shows all too clearly the ravage made by a vexed spirit within, and loses the qualities which only a living artist could feel and capture. Here is a dramatic, defiant bearing, but with it the bitterness of scorn. The disdain of an habitual sneer has found an abode on the mouth, yet scarcely can hide the tremor of irresolution. In Bendann's likeness, indubitably faithful, we find those hardened lines of the chin and neck that are often visible in men who have gambled heavily, which Poe did not in his mature years, or who have lived loosely and slept ill. The face tells of battling, of conquering external enemies, of many a defeat when the man was at war with his meaner self.

The "Bandann" likeness above alluded to, is said to be copied from the last daguerreotype



The Poe Cult

taken in Richmond, just ten days before Poe's untimely death. A photograph of this daguerreotype forms the frontispiece to the Memorial Volume of the ceremonial attending the unveiling of the Poe Monument in Baltimore, November 17, 1875. Mrs. Whitman, in a letter to the present writer, dated Providence, July 2, 1876, thus alludes to another copy of the same portrait:

Harper's Weekly, in its account of the Memorial services, had a wood-cut taken from this portrait, whether from the original or some copy I cannot say, but it was the finest portrait of him, the handsomest and most life-like that I have ever seen. Do you remember it? I should like to see a fine engraving of that portrait as it is presented in *Harper*. It would be invaluable. The expression is entirely different from the copies of the *same portrait* in Widdleton's.

In another letter Mrs. Whitman says:

The picture in the Memorial Volume is from Redfield's illustrated 8vo edition of the poems, but the proportions are changed: the chest seems narrower and more contracted; the neck is longer; the shoulders more sloping, and the whole figure has a clerical air very unlike the original.

One of the earliest pictures of Poe was a

The Poe Cult

miniature once owned by Duval, in Philadelphia, from which was copied the lithograph published in the *Saturday Museum* in 1843, which may still be seen (in proof) in the Pennsylvania Historical Society Collection of lithographs. Next in order of time may be mentioned the engraving in *Graham's Magazine* in 1845, accompanying the now famous article on Poe by James Russell Lowell. One who knew the poet at this period of his life says:

Everything about him distinguished him as a man of mark; his countenance, person, and gait were alike characteristic. His features were regular and decidedly handsome. His complexion was clear and dark; the color of his fine eyes seemingly a dark gray, but on closer inspection they were seen to be of that neutral, violet tint which is so difficult to define. His forehead was without exception the finest in proportion and expression that we have ever seen. The perceptive organs were not deficient, but seemed pressed out of the way by causality, comparison, and constructiveness. Close to these rose the proud arches of ideality.

Some who knew Poe personally say his forehead *retracted*. This feature is brought out only in the Graham picture. In all the others

The Poe Cult

he is so posed as to give the effect of great fullness to the brows. Mrs. Whitman, who remembered Poe as distinctly as any person who had seen him in life, said the engraved portraits of the poet have very little individuality; that prefixed to the volumes edited by Dr. Griswold suggests, at first view, something of the general contour of his face, but is utterly void of character and expression; it has no sub-surface. The original painting, now in possession of the New York Historical Society, has the same cold, automatic look that makes the engraving so valueless as a portrait to those who remember the unmatched glory of his face, when roused from its habitually introverted and abstracted look by some favorite theme or profound emotion. Perhaps, from its peculiarly changeful and translucent character, any adequate transmission of its variable and subtle moods was impossible. By writers personally unacquainted with Poe, this engraving has often been favorably noticed. Hannay, in a memoir prefixed to the first London edition of *Poe's Poems*, calls it an interesting and characteristic portrait:

A fine, thoughtful face, with lineaments of delicacy, such as belong only to genius or high blood—the forehead grand and pale, the eye dark and gleaming with sensibility and soul—

a face to inspire men with interest and curiosity.

In the Winter of 1855-56, Mrs. Whitman was an occasional visitor at the house of Alice and Phoebe Cary, which formed a "sort of fragrant and delicious clovernook" in the heart of New York. The home of the gifted sisters was at that time the favorite resort of poets, artists, and men of letters. In their little drawing room then hung the portrait of Poe by Osgood, now in the New York Historical Gallery (already mentioned). Mrs. Whitman relates that she heard one of the party say of the portrait that its aspect was that of a beautiful and desolate shrine from which the genius had departed, and that it recalled certain lines to one of the antique marbles:

Oh melancholy eyes!
Oh empty eyes, from which the soul has gone
To see the far-off countries!

Near this luminous but impassive face, with its sad and soulless eyes, says Mrs. Whitman, was a portrait of Poe's unrelenting biographer, Griswold. In a recess opposite hung a picture of the fascinating Mrs. Frances Sargent Osgood, whose genius both had so fervently admired, and for whose coveted praise and friendship both had been competitors. Looking at the beautiful portrait of this lady

The Poe Cult

—the face so full of enthusiasm, and dreamy, tropical sunshine—remembering the eloquent words of her praise, as expressed in the prodigal and passionate exaggerations of her verse, one ceases to wonder at the rivalries and enmities which the grave itself could not cancel or appease.

Of the portrait prefixed to the illustrated poems, published by Redfield in 1859, N. P. Willis says:

The reader who has the volume in his hand turns back musingly to look upon the features of the poet, in whom resided such inspiration. But, though well engraved and useful as recalling his features to those who knew them, with the angel shining through, the picture is from a daguerreotype, and gives no idea of the beauty of Edgar Poe. The exquisitely chiselled features, the habitual but intellectual melancholy, the clear pallor of the complexion, and the calm eye like the molten stillness of a slumbering volcano, composed a countenance of which this portrait is but the skeleton. After reading the *Raven*, *Ulalume*, *Lenore*, and *Annabel Lee*, the luxuriast in poetry will better conceive what his face might have been.

Nine lives of Poe have been published, each of which contains a portrait, more or less dif-

The Poe Cult

ferent, but all claiming to be the "best" likeness. Ingram's ambitious but egotistical Memoir contains a photographic copy of a daguerreotype belonging to Mrs. Estelle Anna Lewis. It is a very forbidden likeness, and must have been taken when

Unmerciful Disaster
Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one
burden bore—
Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden
bore
of Never—nevermore.

We turn away with a shudder from this "sorrow-laden" face, wondering what had wrought the terrible change in him whose early beauty had won the highest admiration of both men and women. Was it his own hand that struck the fatal blow that destroyed at once his beauty and happiness? Was the change caused by retributions of conscience, which he had described with such awful fidelity in *William Wilson*, the *Tell-Tale Heart*, and *The Man of the Crowd*? The rapid descent in crime as delineated in *William Wilson* reminded Mrs. Whitman of the subterranean staircase by which Vathek and Nouronihar reached the Hall of Eblis, where, as they descended, they felt their steps frightfully accelerated till they seemed falling from a precipice.

The Poe Cult

In Gill's quixotic Memoir is a portrait copied from a daguerreotype taken from life, which the biographer says "represents the poet in his youthful prime, and by one, a near friend of Poe, who has seen *all* his pictures known to be in existence, is pronounced the best likeness extant." The same portrait is in the Red Line edition of *Poe's Poems*. An idealized engraving of the Osgood portrait accompanies the *Life of Poe* by the writer of this article. It recalls the striking face of the poet to the few now living who knew him in his better days. The portrait in Mr. George E. Woodberry's *Life of Poe*, recently published, is from an original daguerreotype, from which the engraving in the English edition of the complete works was taken. It is owned by Mr. Stedman, and was a gift from Mr. Benjamin H. Ticknor.

The likeness known as the "John Thompson" daguerreotype has been reproduced life size in crayon, and has been pronounced the most satisfactory likeness of Poe. The two engravings made by Sartain, of Philadelphia, were very good in proof, but less successful in their completed state. In the rooms of the Long Island Historical Society, Brooklyn, is a curious portrait made from memory after Poe's death by Gabriel Harrison, author of the

The Poe Cult

Life of John Howard Payne. I have never seen it, but it has been warmly praised by some who have.

When we remember the strange diversity of character displayed in the portraits of Edgar A. Poe, we are more and more inclined to believe that

Two natures in him strove
Like day with night, his sunshine and his gloom.

THE POE MANIA.

The irony of fate was never more strikingly displayed than in the case of Edgar A. Poe. A life of sorrow and suffering, a wretched death, and a splendid posthumous fame—such was the malevolent destiny of America's greatest genius. The first editions of those extraordinary tales and marvelous poems, for which Poe received a beggarly compensation, are now fought for by wealthy collectors. In 1827 the first edition of Poe's Poems was printed in Boston—printed, but not published, "for private reasons." I strongly suspect that "the private reasons" why the first edition of Poe's Poems was not published was because the poet had not the money to pay for the printing. That little book of forty pages in the course of time became one of the rarest books in the world. As it is one of the curiosities of literature, it will be interesting to many readers to have its title page in full. I have copied it, as follows:

The Poe Cult

TAMERLANE, AND OTHER POEMS,

By a Bostonian.

Young heads are giddy, and young hearts are warm,
And make mistakes for manhood to reform.

Cowper.

BOSTON:

CALVIN F. S. F. THOMAS, PRINTER.

1827.

An autograph dealer, not renowned for paying extravagant prices for what he buys, offered \$500 for the original manuscript of the Raven. The pecuniary value placed upon it by the present owner is \$10,000.

One of the most enthusiastic admirers of Poe is John H. Ingram, of London. He spent several years and some money in collecting everything bearing upon his favorite subject —books, portraits, letters, magazine articles, etc. He had agents in several cities of the United States picking up material of every description. He not only collected portraits of Poe, but of every person in any way associated with him. For instance, he wanted a portrait of Thomas Jefferson, not because he was the author of the Declaration of Independence and President of the United States, but because he was the Founder of the University of Virginia, where Poe was educated; he wanted a likeness of Lafayette, not because he was a hero and a patriot, but because he was a friend

of the poet's grandfather, Gen. Poe of the American Revolution; he wanted a portrait of Margaret J. Preston, not because she was a gifted poetess, but because her husband was a schoolmate of Poe in Richmond; he wanted a portrait of George W. Childs, not because he was a famous American editor, but because he contributed largely toward the Poe monument which was erected in Baltimore in November, 1875; he wanted a portrait of John Tyler, not because he was a President of the United States, but because his son, Robert Tyler, was one of Poe's early friends, and so on. These things show what a wonderful hold Poe has upon those afflicted with the Poe mania. The literature of the world scarcely offers anything to compare with it. Byron, Milton, Tennyson, Keats, Shelley, and other famous poets do not possess the same interest.

A file of the *Broadway Journal*, of which Poe was the editor, will sell for a sum that would have supported the little family at Fordham in comfort for a year. It was in the cottage there that the poet's wife died in unspeakable wretchedness in the Winter of 1847, a calamity which, as the distracted husband wrote at the time, so overwhelmed him as to deprive him for several weeks of all power of

The Poe Cult

thought or action. It was at this cottage that he wrote the *Bells*, *Annabel Lee*, and the wonderful prose poem, *Eureka*.

Old magazines in which Poe's poems and tales originally appeared are eagerly sought for by Poe enthusiasts. I have known odd volumes of *Southern Literary Messenger* to bring as high as \$5.00 a volume simply because Poe was once its editor. For the same reason *Graham's Magazine* brings an extravagant price; it would have little value except for Poe's association with it, although at one time it had a circulation of 40,000 a month—an enormous circulation sixty years ago.

This extraordinary Poe mania began about thirty years ago, and has continued with ever-increasing violence ever since. It is confined, generally, to one sex, but extends to all classes and conditions of men—lawyers, editors, authors, professors, men of leisure, etc. The beginner never knows where he will end. In fact, he ends only with his money, or his life. The most patient wife must have her temper ruffled when she sees her house littered up with a miscellaneous collection of stuff, neither useful nor ornamental, purchased at an outlay which, if expended on furniture and decorations, would have made her home the House Beautiful.

THE SEMI-CENTENNIAL OF AMERICA'S FAMOUS POET.

The semi-centennial of the death of Edgar Allan Poe possesses a melancholy interest for all who admire genius, and have a pity for the misfortunes that so often attend those who receive the fateful gift. No American poet, living or dead, has attracted more attention than the author of "The Raven." Nine lives of him have been written, yet about no celebrated poet of modern times has it been more difficult to obtain the real facts of both his life and death. According to some of his biographers, he mingled among men as a bewildered angel; while others describe him as a prying fiend; or, an Ishmaelite, with his hands against everyone, and everyone's against him. The time and place of his birth were for many years uncertain; even now some of his biographers still differ upon the subject. The place of his burial was at one time undecided, but that was definitely settled, in 1875, when his remains were discovered in Westminster churchyard, Baltimore, and a monument erected over his grave.

Born in poverty, reared in luxury, and

The Poe Cult

thrown upon the world without a dollar, he lived and died a mystery. When Alexander the Great set out to conquer the world, he depended upon his sword. Edgar Poe, at the same age as the great Macedonian, was compelled to depend upon his pen for a living at a time when literature was not recognized as a profession in this country, and when the rewards of even the highest literary talent were beggarly in the extreme.

The sad and romantic story of Poe's life has touched a sympathetic chord in the heart of the world. Never before or since has so much misery been united to so much genius. Believers in heredity see in him a remarkable example of the truth of their opinion. His father, David Poe, Jr., a Baltimore law student, ran off with and married Elizabeth Arnold, an English actress. The husband adopted his wife's profession. After a wandering life of toil and poverty, they both died within a few weeks of each other, leaving three children. Edgar, the second son, was adopted by a Mr. Allan, a wealthy merchant of that city, who, after rearing him as the heir of a princely fortune, cut him off without a shilling. Homeless and penniless, Edgar wandered to Baltimore, where he found a home in the house of Mrs. Clemm, his father's sis-

ter. He married his lovely young cousin, Virginia Clemm, and the three formed a happy little household until the death of his child-wife in the midst of heartrending poverty, caused by the constant watching of the poet by the sick bed of the sufferer, deprived him of his only means of support—his pen.

“Ah, broken is the golden bowl! the spirit flown forever!
Let this bell toll! a saintly soul floats on the Stygian river!
Come, let the burial rite be read—the funeral song be sung!
An anthem for the queenliest dead that ever died so young—
A dirge for her, the doubly dead, in that she died so young.”

In Lenore, in Annabel Lee, in Eulalie, and other poems, Poe embalmed the memory of his wife in immortal dirges.

From the intolerable sorrow, caused by the loss of his fair and gentle wife, Poe was aroused to a temporary forgetfulness by the affectionate sympathy of Sarah Helen Whitman, the most gifted poetess of New England. For a few brief weeks they were engaged to be married. Why the engagement was broken has never been satisfactorily explained, but that Poe was not blameable in the matter is proved by the fact that Mrs. Whitman re-

mained his friend, and was his enthusiastic defender as long as she lived. One of her last poems was to "The Portrait of Poe," in which she pays a beautiful tribute to his genius, and offers a touching proof of her devotion to his memory.

In striking contrast were the first and last funerals of Edgar A. Poe. On that dreary Autumn day in 1849, when the most original of American poets was laid to rest among his ancestors, in Westminster churchyard, only one carriage followed the remains to the grave. The ceremony was scant, and the attendants were scantier, for eight persons only were present. Poe had died under a cloud—the hapless victim of "unmerciful disaster"—his last hours were passed in the charity ward of a public hospital; he was buried in a poplar coffin, stained to imitate walnut; it was a funeral such as a poor man, with few friends and no relatives, might have had.

The account given of Poe's funeral, by Dr. John J. Moran, in his "Defense of Edgar A. Poe," is known to be incorrect and misleading. For instance, he gives the names of eight persons as present at the funeral, only two of whom were there. They were Rev. W. T. D. Clemm and Mr. Henry Herring, both of whom were relatives of Poe. The other persons who

attended the first burial were: Z. Collins Lee, afterwards judge of the Superior Court of Baltimore, who had been a classmate of Poe at the University of Virginia; Neilson Poe, afterwards chief judge of the Orphans' Court of Baltimore; Edmund Smith, a well-known school-teacher in Baltimore fifty years ago, and his wife, who was a first cousin of the poet; Dr. J. E. Snodgrass, the last editor of the Baltimore Saturday Visitor, the paper from which Poe received the \$100 prize offered for the best story.

Another of Dr. Moran's misstatements is that the body of the poet was laid in state in the large room in the rotunda of the college building adjoining the hospital, that "hundreds of his friends and acquaintances came to see him, that at least fifty ladies received locks of his hair." Poe had not a dozen friends in Baltimore, and if "fifty ladies received locks of his hair," the poet's cranium must have been reduced to the appearance of a billiard ball. What became of those coveted "locks" from the head that conceived "The Raven," "The Gold Bug," "The Fall of the House of Usher," "The Bells," and other marvelous tales and poems that have thrilled the world for fifty years? In these days, when a letter written by Poe readily brings \$200 in the autograph

The Poe Cult

market, a lock of the poet's hair would be worth a small fortune to its owner. The "fifty ladies" who received "locks of Poe's hair" existed only in Dr. Moran's imagination; he wished to throw a little sympathy and sentiment around the horrible tragedy of Poe's wretched death. The doctor's intention was good, but we are dealing with facts, not fiction—we are writing history, not romance. The picture, stripped of all romance and sentiment, is ghastly enough to suit the most melodramatic play that ever stirred the lieges in the Bowery Theatre.

The second burial of Edgar A. Poe took place on the 17th of November, 1875. The occasion was interesting and remarkable. The ceremonies took place in the large hall of the building then used as the Western Female High School, on the corner of Fayette and Greene Streets, adjoining Westminster church, in the graveyard of which the body of the poet had rested for twenty-six years without a stone to show that it was the grave of the most unique genius that America has given to the world. Among those seated upon the platform were: Walt Whitman, Dr. Nathan Covington Brooks, in whose Baltimore Magazine some of Poe's early writings had appeared; Dr. J. E. Snodgrass, Prof. Joseph Clarke, who

was Poe's first teacher in Richmond; John T. Morris, the President of the Baltimore School Board; Neilson Poe, Rev. Dr. John G. Morris, Vice President and afterwards President of the Maryland Historical Society; John T. Ford, Manager of Ford's Grand Opera House; Prof. William Elliot, Jr., President of the Baltimore City College; Henry E. Shepherd, Superintendent of the Public Schools of Baltimore.

The exercises opened with the reading of the history of the movement for the erection of the monument, by Prof. Elliot; this was followed by the reading of the letters written by Tennyson, Swinburne, Longfellow, Holmes, Aldrich, Mrs. Margaret J. Preston, and Mrs. Sarah Helen Whitman; with poetic tributes from Paul H. Hayne and Stephane Mallarme, the French admirer of Poe. The best of the poetic tributes was written by William Winter, entitled, "At Poe's Grave." Two stanzas from this touchingly sympathetic poem will give an idea of the tender grace of charity that inspired the poet:

Through many a year his fame has grown—
Like midnight, vast; like starlight, sweet—
Till now his genius fills a throne,
And Nations marvel at his feet.

The Poe Cult

One meed of justice long delayed,
One crowning grace his virtues crave—
Ah, take, thou great and injured shade,
The love that sanctifies the grave.

Prof. Shepherd delivered a masterly address on the "Genius and Literary Character of Poe," at the conclusion of which he congratulated the audience that "The Poetic corner of our Westminster was at last rescued from the ungrateful neglect which for a quarter of a century has constituted the just reproach of our state and our metropolis. In the dedication of this monument to the memory of our poet, I recognize an omen of highest and noblest import, reaching far beyond the mere preservation of his fame by the 'dull, cold marble,' which marks his long-neglected grave." Prof. Shepherd's address was listened to with profound attention. Mr. John H. B. Latrobe, the last survivor of the committee of three gentlemen who awarded the prize to Poe for the best prose tale, then gave some personal reminiscences of the poet, after which the audience proceeded to Westminster church-yard, where the unveiling of the monument took place. During the ceremony of the unveiling the Philharmonic Society chanted the dirge, "Sleep and Rest," which was adapted from Tennyson's "Sweet and Low," by Mrs.

The Poe Cult

Eleanor Fullerton. Poe's mother had been an actress at the Holliday Street Theatre, Baltimore, and an interesting feature of the ceremonies upon the occasion of the last burial of our poet was the placing upon the monument of a beautiful wreath composed of camelias, lilies and tea roses, a tribute from the company at Ford's Grand Opera House, gotten up through the active zeal of Mrs. Germon, the veteran actress. The funds for this monument were largely raised through the efforts of Miss Sara S. Rice, of the Western Female High School, who also took a prominent part in the exercises.

How striking the difference between the first and last burial of Edgar A. Poe! The former was a funeral such as is given to the poor, the obscure, the friendless; the latter was a magnificent demonstration in honor of a poet who has bestowed more glory upon American literature than any other American author.

THE TRUTH ABOUT EDGAR A. POE.

For a quarter of a century after Poe's death, his enemies had the ear of the world. The weakness of human nature makes us listen with willing ears, and with more pleasure to blame than to praise. The lies that were told about Poe, the crimes that were recklessly imputed to him, the dark stories that were laid at his door, the vile slanders that were repeated about him, with "ghoulish glee," must have delighted "the demons down under the sea." Poe was scarcely cold in his grave before Rufus W. Griswold published his malignant Memoir of the Poet, which, for twenty-five years, was accepted as the true story of the life and death of the author of "The Raven." With few exceptions, this mendacious memoir was followed in all subsequent biographies of Poe; and, naturally, for Griswold was supposed to be his trusted friend and chosen biographer. The world did not know that Griswold, smarting under Poe's severe but well-deserved criticism of his "Poets and Poetry of America," had nursed his wrath and kept it

The Poe Cult

warm until the poet was dead and helpless, and then told his venomous story. Of this biography, one who knew Poe well has truly said, that, "compared with its remorseless violations of confided trust, the unhallowed act of Tre-lawney in removing the pall from the feet of the dead Byron, seems guiltless."

It should be unnecessary, at this late day, when ten lives of Poe have been published, to point out Griswold's numerous misstatements, false charges, and insinuations, which were employed with the devilish ingenuity of Iago, were it not much easier to start a falsehood than to stop it when it is once on its travels.

Conversing with an accomplished woman, one evening, the name of Poe was mentioned, when she exclaimed:

"What a strange contrast between the poet and his poetry! In his poetry he ascends to the sky; in his life he grovelled upon the earth. With a love of the beautiful that takes us back to the most glorious days of Greece, his degraded life takes us back to the days of the drunken Helots. His poetry is all as sweet and pure as wild flowers, while his life was one wild debauch."

This is given as a fair specimen of the opinion that still prevails among many intelligent persons of the poet. Too many persons who

The Poe Cult

should know better still believe that Poe was a drunken vagabond, a literary Ishmael, a Pariah among poets. He was devoted to his young, beautiful, and accomplished wife, and her death, under distressing circumstances, unparalleled in literary annals, destroyed his health, and, for a time, drove reason from its imperial throne. I knew Mrs. Clemm, in the last years of her life, and visited her with youthful enthusiasm, as the "more than mother" of the poet. She told me that "Eddie" (as she always called him) was the most gentle, affectionate and devoted of husbands and sons—that he never went to bed at night without asking her blessing, and, if he had done anything to displease her, he would kneel at her feet, and humbly ask her forgiveness. This was the man who, Griswold said, "had no faith in man or woman." This was the man whom Griswold pronounced "naturally unamiable, irascible, envious, self-satisfied, self-confident." N. P. Willis, who knew Poe intimately, declared that he possessed the very qualities which his enemies denied to him—humility, belief in another's kindness, and capability of cordial and grateful friendship. Willis remembered him with respect and admiration, saying that his "modesty and unaffected humility as to his own deservings were

a constant charm to his character." Poe not only had the greatest "faith in woman," but women, the best, the most refined, the most cultivated women, had the greatest faith in him. Mrs. Frances Sargent Osgood, speaking of her own "affectionate interest" in Poe, said: "No woman could know him personally without feeling the same interest—he was so gentle, generous, well-bred and refined. To a sensitive and delicately nurtured woman, there was a peculiar and irresistible charm in the chivalric, graceful and almost tender reverence with which he approached all women." "So far from being selfish and heartless," said Mrs. Sarah Helen Whitman, "his devotional fidelity to those he loved would, by the world, be regarded as fanatical." He carried his chivalry to the fair sex so far that when women were the subjects of his criticism, his usually stern and severe opinions were greatly modified, and, as he himself said, "I cannot point an arrow against any woman."

Poe lived and died a mystery to himself, to his friends, and to the world. We know that his life was a romance, his death a tragedy, that his fame is immortal, and that never before nor since has so much misery been united to so much genius. He is the most interesting and picturesque personality in American lit-

erature. His strange and romantic life has always possessed a singular fascination for me, while his wonderful poems, and still more wonderful tales have been my literary passion since boyhood. When still in my teens, I was presented with the original four-volume edition of Poe's works containing Griswold's infamous memoir. I could not reconcile the dark story of the poet's life, as there told, with the purity, beauty, and refinement of his writings. I began a systematic study of his life; I put myself in communication with his surviving friends and relatives, personally and by letter; I saw Professor Joseph H. Clarke, his first teacher in Richmond; I visited the University of Virginia, and secured the recollections of Mr. William Wertenbaker, the librarian, who was at the University when Poe was a student there; I corresponded with Col. J. T. L. Preston, a former schoolmate of the poet; I consulted my father-in-law, the late Gen. Lucius Bellinger Northrop, who was the last survivor of Poe's classmates at West Point; I called on Mr. John H. B. Latrobe, one of the committee of gentlemen who awarded the prize to Poe for the best tale; I interviewed Judge Neilson Poe, the nearest surviving relative of the poet; I became acquainted with Mrs. Clemm, in the last years of her life; I sought

out Gabriel H. Harrison, one of the last of Poe's friends; I went to Richmond, and had a talk with Mr. Valentine, the brother of Edward V. Valentine, the distinguished sculptor, who retained a vivid recollection of Poe's appearance when he delivered his lecture in Richmond on "The Poetic Principle," on his last visit there in 1849; but the best of all my achievements in search of Poeana was a correspondence with Sarah Helen Whitman, Poe's most devoted friend.

Professor Clarke, after over half a century, recalled with much interest and manifest pleasure Edgar Poe as one of his pupils at his school in Richmond. He said: "The boy was a born poet, and, as a scholar, he was anxious to excel, and always acquitted himself well in his classes. He was remarkable for self-respect, without haughtiness. In his demeanor toward his playmates, he was strictly just and correct, which made him a general favorite. His predominant passion seemed to me to be an enthusiastic ardor in everything he undertook. Even in those early years, he displayed the germs of that wonderfully rich and splendid imagination which has placed him in the front rank of the purely imaginative poets of the world. While the other boys wrote mere mechanical verses, Poe wrote genuine poetry, and

The Poe Cult

he wrote it not as a task, but *con amore*." When Professor Clarke left Richmond in 1823, young Poe addressed to his beloved teacher a poem which was a remarkable production for a boy of fourteen. In after years, the Professor was proud of his distinguished pupil, and referred, to his dying day, to the fact that Poe always called upon him when he visited Baltimore, to which city Mr. Clarke removed from Richmond.

Colonel John T. L. Preston was one of Poe's schoolmates at Clarke's Academy, and furnished me with some interesting particulars of the future poet's school-days in Richmond: "As a scholar, he was distinguished specially for Latin and French; in poetical composition, he was *facile princeps*. He was the best boxer, the swiftest runner, and the most daring swimmer at Clarke's school. Indeed, his swimming feats at the Great Falls of the James River were not surpassed by the more celebrated feat of Byron in swimming from Sestos to Abydos.

Griswold's most reckless and untruthful statement about Poe was that, "in 1822 he entered the University of Virginia, where he led a very dissipated life, and was known as the wildest student of his class; but his unusual opportunities, and the remarkable ease

with which he mastered the most difficult studies, kept him all the while in the first rank for scholarship, and he would have graduated with the highest honors, had not his gambling, intemperance, and other vices induced his expulsion from the university." So much for the Reverend Rufus Wilmot Griswold! This reverend defamer of the dead had given Poe's birth as having taken place in January, 1811, thus making him a gambler, drunkard, and debauché at the tender age of eleven years!—surpassing in precocious vice the infamous Elagabalus. The fact is that Poe was born in 1809, the *annus mirabilis* which produced Mrs. Browning, Tennyson, Gladstone, and other illustrious men. To ascertain the truth about Poe at the University of Virginia, I went there, and interviewed Mr. William Wertemberger, the librarian, who had been a classmate of the poet. He gave me the following facts: "Edgar Poe entered the University February 14, 1826, and remained until the 15th of December of the same year. He entered the schools of ancient and modern languages, attending the lectures on Latin, Greek, French, Spanish, and Italian. I was myself a member of the last three classes, and can testify that he was regular in attendance, and a very successful student, having obtained distinction at

The Poe Cult

the final examination in Latin and French. This would have entitled him to graduate in those two languages. I often saw Mr. Poe in the lecture room and in the library, but never in the slightest degree under the influence of intoxicating liquors. Among the professors he had the reputation of being a sober, quiet, and orderly young man. To them, and to the officers, his deportment was universally that of an intelligent and polished gentleman. The records of the university, of which I was then, and am still, the custodian, attest that at no time during the session did he fall under the censure of the Faculty. It will gratify the many admirers of Poe to know that his works are more in demand and more read than those of any other author, American or foreign, now in the library."

General Lucius Bellinger Northrop, the last survivor of the classmates of Poe at West Point, told me that Edgar Poe, at West Point, was the wrong man in the wrong place--although, from an intellectual point of view, he stood high there, as elsewhere: the records of the academy show that he was third in French, and seventeenth in mathematics in a class of eighty-seven. The severe studies and dull routine duties were extremely distasteful to the young poet, and, at the end of six months, he

The Poe Cult

applied to his adopted father, Mr. Allan, for permission to leave the academy, which request was promptly refused. Poe then determined to find a way for himself, and began a systematic neglect of his duties, and a regular disobedience of orders. He was summoned before a court-martial, charged with the "gross neglect of all his duties, and of disobedience of orders." To these charges he pleaded guilty, and was at once sentenced to be dismissed from the service of the United States. Poe was as much out of place at West Point as Achilles was when he was hid among the women in his youth. The rough sports and practical jokes of the cadets were utterly repugnant to the proud, sensitive, and dreamy young poet who already aspired to be the American Byron.

In my search after Poe material, I called upon Mr. John H. B. Latrobe, who, as already mentioned, was one of the three gentlemen who awarded him the prize of \$100 for the best prose tale. He said that Poe showed his gratitude by calling on each of the gentlemen composing the committee, and thanking them for awarding the prize to him.

Neilson Poe told me his cousin Edgar was one of the best-hearted men that ever lived. In society, his manner was sometimes cold and

The Poe Cult

his bearing proud and haughty, but at home, and among intimate friends, his kind and affectionate nature manifested itself in all its sweetness. The late Dr. Nathan Covington Brooks, of Baltimore, who was Poe's friend from first to last, said to me that "Edgar Poe impressed him as a man inspired by noble and exalted sentiments."

Count de Maistre declared that "history for the last three hundred years has been a conspiracy against the truth." With equal truth we might say that American literature for the last fifty years has been a conspiracy against the truth so far as Edgar A. Poe is concerned. The unimpeachable witnesses already produced, and those that follow, should convince every unprejudiced mind that America's most illustrious poet possessed the very virtues which have been persistently denied to him.

I wish to repeat here what I have said before, namely, that Burns' Highland Mary, Petrarch's Laura, Byron's Mary Chaworth, Dante's Beatrice, Surrey's Fair Geraldine, Spenser's Rosalind, Carew's Celia, Waller's Sacharissa, Klopstock's Meta, Swift's Stella, Lemartine's Elvire, Campbell's Caroline, Wordsworth's Lucy, Allan Cunningham's Bonnie Jean, and other real and imaginary loves of the poets, who have been immortalized

The Poe Cult

in song, were not more worthy of poetical adoration than Sarah Helen Whitman, the friend and defender of Edgar A. Poe. Of this gifted lady it has been beautifully said: "She was ever sensitive to the slightest criticism of Poe's faults, walking softly backward and throwing over them the shielding mantle of her love. Heedless of the world's cold sneer, she seized her pen whenever she thought him treated with injustice, and defended his memory with all the warmth of a woman and a poet." Some of her most beautiful verses were inspired by the recollections of her poet-lover. Of these, one not known to the present generation of readers has always been a particular favorite of mine. It is called:

THE PORTRAIT OF POE.

Slowly I raised the purple folds concealing
That face, magnetic as the morning's beam;
While slumbering memory thrilled at its revealing,
Like Memnon waking from his marble dream.

Again I saw the brow's translucent pallor,
The dark hair floating o'er it like a plume;
The sweet imperious mouth, whose haughty valor
Defied all portents of impending doom.

Eyes planet calm, with something in their vision
That seemed not of earth's mortal mixture born;
Strange mythic faiths and fantasies Elysian,
And far, sweet dreams of "fairy lands forlorn."

The Poe Cult

Unfathomable eyes that held the sorrow
Of vanished ages in their shadowy deeps;
Lit by that prescience of a heavenly morrow
Which in high hearts the immortal spirit keeps.

Oft has that pale poetic presence haunted
My lonely musing at the twilight hour,
Transforming the dull earth-life it enchanted,
With marvel, and with mystery, and with power.

Oft have I heard the sullen sea-wind moaning
Its dirge-like requiems on the lonely shore,
Or listened to the autumn woods intoning
The wild sweet legend of the lost Lenore.

Oft in some ashen evening of October,
Have stood entranced beside a mouldering tomb,
Hard by that visionary tarn of Auber,
Where sleeps the shrouded form of Ulalume.

Oft in chill, starlit nights have heard the chiming
Of far-off mellow bells on the keen air,
And felt their molten-golden music timing
To the heart's pulses answering unaware.

Sweet, mournful eyes, long closed upon earth's sorrow,
Sleep restfully after life's fevered dream!
Sleep, wayward heart! till on some cool, bright morn-
row,
Thy soul, refreshed, shall bathe in morning's beam.

Though cloud and shadow rest upon thy story,
And rude hands lift the drapery of thy pall,
Time, as a birthright, shall restore thy glory,
And Heaven rekindle all the stars that fall.

The Poe Cult

The prophecy contained in the last verse of Mrs. Whitman's poem has been gloriously fulfilled. Time has not only "restored" his "glory," but placed him first among American poets. The strange, imaginary mythology used so effectively by Poe, is very happily introduced by Mrs. Whitman in the above poem. She was deeply imbued with the spirit of Poe's genius, and her pure, poetic soul responded with delicate, feminine grace to the inspiration of his divinely beautiful poetry.

It was Mrs. Whitman, and other refined and cultured women, including Mrs. Frances Sargent Osgood, Mrs. Estella Anna Lewis, etc., who first began the Poe cult, which has since spread over the civilized world. While many ignorant or prejudiced men have attacked Poe, few, if any, self-respecting women have taken part in his defamation. It was this fact that first convinced me that there was good in the author of "The Raven." The defamers of the poet have invented a Frankenstein monster—a being devoid of all human affection, sympathy, and feeling—and labelled it Edgar Allan Poe.

The most disgraceful story invented by Griswold about Poe was in regard to the breaking off his engagement with Mrs. Whitman. He said that Poe, wishing to break the engage-

The Poe Cult

ment, went to her house in a state of intoxication, and behaved so outrageously that the police had to be called in to expel the drunken intruder. This scandalous story was believed, and did more to injure Poe's character than any of the many lies that have been invented about him. Mrs. Whitman emphatically denied Griswold's story: "No such scene as that described by Dr. Griswold ever transpired in my presence. No one, certainly no woman, who had the slightest acquaintance with Edgar Poe could have credited the story for an instant. He was essentially, and instinctively a gentleman, utterly incapable, even in moments of excitement and delirium, of such an outrage as Dr. Griswold has ascribed to him. . . . During one of his visits in the autumn of 1848, I once saw him after one of those nights of wild excitement, before reason had fully regained its throne. Yet even then, in those frenzied moments, when the door of the mind's 'Haunted Palace' was left all unguarded, his words were the words of a princely intellect overwrought, and of a heart only too sensitive and too finely strung. I repeat that no one acquainted with Edgar Poe could have given Dr. Griswold's anecdote a moment's credence."

A man is known by his enemies as well as by

The Poe Cult

his friends. Who were Poe's enemies? It is not necessary to mention any others, as it would only serve to keep alive their ignoble names; they were men whose malignancy was equalled by their mendacity. He has outlived their worst enmity, and while they have disappeared in a sea of oblivion, he has landed safely on the shore of immortality. While Poe's enemies have in the end injured themselves, his friends have builded better than they knew, and their names shall live with his in American literature. Perhaps the time will come when N. P. Willis—the once popular poet and magazinist—shall be known only as Poe's generous friend and defender, when the literary jackals were rending his defenceless remains. The name of George R. Graham should long since have passed away but for the fact that Poe was the editor of Graham's Magazine, whose publisher wrote a splendid defence of the poet, in which he denounced Griswold's Memoir as "an immortal infamy—the fancy sketch of a perverted, jaundiced vision." Such a "devilish" piece of work should not have accompanied Poe's writings, being, said Graham, "the death's-head over the entrance to the garden of beauty, a horror that clings to the brow of the morning, whispering of murder."

When the Poe monument was unveiled in Baltimore, on the 17th of November, 1875, many of the American poets were invited to the ceremonial, but, excepting Walt Whitman, they sent "regrets." James Russell Lowell wrote: "I need not assure you that I sympathize very heartily with the sentiment which led to the erection of the monument." Oliver Wendell Holmes expressed himself more at length, and more enthusiastically, as follows: "No one, surely, needs a monument less than the poet.

His monument shall be his gentle verse,
Which eyes not yet created shall o'er read.
And tongues to be his being shall rehearse,
When all the breathers of this world are dead.

Yet we would not leave him without a stone to mark the spot where the hands 'that waked to ecstasy the living lyre' were laid in the dust. He that can confer an immortality which outlasts bronze and granite deserves this poor tribute, not for his sake so much as ours. The hearts of all who reverence the inspiration of genius, who can look tenderly upon the infirmities too often attending it, who can feel for its misfortunes, will sympathize with you as you gather around the resting place of all that was mortal of Edgar Allan Poe, and raise the stone inscribed with one of the few names

which will outlive the graven record meant to perpetuate its remembrance." Sarah Helen Whitman, Poe's gifted and devoted friend, whose beautiful little volume, "Edgar Poe and his Critics," was one of the first as it was the best defence of the poet from the malicious aspersions of Griswold, sent a very feeling note, in which she said: "I need not assure you that the generous efforts of the association in whose behalf you write, have called forth my warmest sympathy and most grateful appreciation." Thomas Bailey Aldrich wrote: "Your desire to honor the genius of Edgar A. Poe is in the heart of every man of letters, though perhaps no American author stands so little in need of a monument as the author of 'The Raven.' His imperishable fame is in all lands." One of the most eloquent tributes came from S. D. Lewis, the husband of Estelle Anna Lewis, who was one of Poe's most cherished friends. His interesting letter is too long to be quoted entire, but the following paragraph speaks for itself: "Edgar Poe was one of the most affectionate, kind-hearted men I ever knew. I never witnessed so much tender affection and devoted love as existed in that family of three persons. I have spent several weeks in the closest intimacy with him, and I never saw him drink a drop of liquor, or

beer, in my life. He was always in my presence the polished gentleman, the profound scholar, the true critic, the inspired oracular poet—dreamy and spiritual, lofty, but sad.” Longfellow, who was asked to suggest an appropriate inscription for the monument, wrote that “the only lines of Mr. Poe that I now recall as in any way appropriate to the purpose you mention are from a poem entitled ‘For Annie.’ They are,

‘The fever called living
Is conquered at last.’”

From across the sea came tributes from Tennyson, Swinburne, Richard H. Horne, and Mallarmé, the French poet. Tennyson’s note was brief, saying simply: “I have long been acquainted with Poe’s works, and am an admirer of them.” A poet whose verses brought five pounds a line, could not afford to spend many lines on the subject of a monument to a brother-poet although that poet had been one of the first to recognize the other’s genius, and before his own countrymen had begun to appreciate him had pronounced him “the noblest poet that ever lived.” Swinburne, full of the glowing enthusiasm of youth, paid a noble tribute to Poe: “The genius of Edgar Poe has won, on this side of the Atlantic, such wide

The Poe Cult

and warm recognition that the sympathy which I cannot hope fitly or fully to express in adequate words, is undoubtedly shared at this moment by hundreds, not in England only but France as well. . . . It is not for me to offer any tribute here to the fame of your great countryman, or dilate, with superfluous and intrusive admiration, on the special quality of his strong and delicate genius—so sure of aim, and faultless of touch, in all the finer and better part of the work he has left us. Widely as the fame of Poe has already spread, and deeply as it is already rooted in Europe, it is even now growing wider and striking deeper as time advances, the surest presage that time, the eternal enemy of small and shallow reputations, will prove, in this case also, the constant and trusty friend and keeper of a true poet's full-grown fame.” Mallarmé, with the grace of a true Frenchman, placed a poem on

THE TOMB OF EDGAR POE.

Even as eternity his soul reclaimed,
The poet's song ascended in a strain
So pure, the astonished age that had defamed,
Saw death transformed in that divine refrain.*

While writhing coils of hydra-headed wrong,
Listening, and wondering at that heavenly song,
Deemed they had drank of some foul mixture brewed
In Circe's maddening cup, with sorcery imbued.

**Annabel Lee.*

The Poe Cult

Alas! if from an alien to his clime,
No *bas-relief* may grace that front sublime,
Stern block, in some obscure disaster hurled
From the rent heart of a primeval world,

Through storied centuries thou shalt proudly stand
In the memorial city of his land,
A silent monitor, austere and gray,
To warn the clamorous brood of harpies from their
prey.

This poem was translated by Sarah Helen Whitman from the original copy which the French poet sent to her. Mrs. Whitman was good enough to furnish the present writer with a copy of her translation.

Of all the tributes to Poe, prose or poetry, inspired by the unveiling of the monument, the poem by William Winter was by far the most beautiful.

AT POE'S GRAVE

Cold is the paean honor sings,
And chill is glory's icy breath,
And pale the garland memory brings
To grace the iron doors of death.

Fame's echoing thunders, long and loud,
The pomp of pride that decks the pall,
The plaudits of the vacant crowd—
One word of love is worth them all.

The Poe Cult

With dews of grief our eyes are dim;

 Ah, let the tear of sorrow start,
And honor, in ourselves and him,
 The great and tender human heart!

Through many a night of want and woe

 His frenzied spirit wandered wild—
Till kind disaster laid him low,
 And Heaven reclaimed its wayward child.

Through many a year his fame has grown,—

 Like midnight, vast, like starlight sweet,
Till now his genius fills a throne,
 And nations marvel at his feet.

One meed of justice long delayed,

 One crowning grace his virtues crave:—
Ah, take, thou great and injured shade,
 The love that sanctifies the grave!

God's mercy guard in peaceful sleep,

 The sacred dust that slumbers here:
And, while around *this tomb we weep*,
 God bless, for us, the mourner's tear!

And may his spirit hovering nigh,

 Pierce the dense cloud of darkness through,
And know, with fame that cannot die,
 He has the world's affection, too!

The greatest critics of England and France have pronounced Poe the most consummate literary artist of the nineteenth century, the greatest critic of his age, and one of the most

The Poe Cult

remarkable geniuses of all time. Swinburne, the master-spirit of the new school of English poetry, places Poe first among the American poets. Tennyson's admiration of the poet who was the first to recognize his own youthful genius has been already mentioned. The impression made upon Mrs. Browning by "The Raven" is familiar to all readers.

The impetus given to the fame of Poe by the erection of the monument to his memory in his own city of Baltimore attracted the attention of an Englishman who was otherwise unknown. This obscure individual claimed to have "discovered" Edgar A. Poe, and to have introduced that poet to his countrymen and ours. This claim, preposterous as it may seem now, when the name and fame of Poe has gone abroad into all civilized lands, was not absolutely without foundation a quarter of a century ago. Poe's fame, which rose high after the publication of "The Raven" in 1845, sank low after his wretched death in 1849. When he could no longer wield his powerful pen, his name and fame were assailed by a crowd of writers whose literary pretensions he had exposed with merciless severity. It was a case of asses kicking at a dead lion. These men and their friends had access to the periodicals of the time, and they painted Poe in such dark

The Poe Cult

colors that his fame was obscured, and his name covered with obloquy. Some of these literary jackals are still alive, and they have lived to see the fame of Poe cover the world, having burst in triumphant splendor through the dark clouds with which they had hoped to cover it forever.

In 1869, a copy of Poe's Poems, New York, 1831, in the original boards, was knocked down at auction for \$1. In 1902, a copy of the same edition brought \$360 under the hammer. For "The Raven," one of the most remarkable poems in all literature, Poe was paid \$10. For the original manuscript of the same poem the present fortunate owner asks \$10,000. Such is fame! I can myself remember when the poet's grave was unknown—the place uncertain—the very churchyard a matter of doubt and dispute.

Edgar Poe fought a desperate battle against a pitiless fate, and fell in the midst of the struggle, wounded, defeated, and destroyed. He never earned a dollar except by his pen, and he was miserably paid for his elegant and scholarly work. As the editor of the leading American magazine, his salary was only \$10 a week, the pay of many boys of seventeen, as shorthand writers, at the present day. His life of sadness and suffering, of sorrow and

The Poe Cult

song, was brought to a sudden close, when a brighter future seemed to be opening for him whom

“Unmerciful disaster
Had followed fast, and followed faster,
Till his songs one burden bore
Of ‘never—nevermore.’ ”





SARAH HELEN WHITMAN.

EDGAR ALLAN POE IN SOCIETY.

Although more than a dozen lives of Edgar Allan Poe have been published, as well as innumerable magazine and newspaper articles, very little has been said of one of the most charming and interesting phases of his life. I refer to the subject of this article—Poe in society. Sixty-five years ago, fashionable American society was not frequented by poets any more than it is at present, but Poe was a welcome guest in the most cultured circles which New York could then boast. After the publication of "The Raven," in the *American Review*, in February, 1845, Poe became, not only the talk of the town, but the talk of the nation. His presence was much sought in the best society of the metropolis, where he was the object of universal attention, as Lord Byron had been in the most exclusive London society after the publication of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.

It is admitted, even by Poe's worst enemies, that he possessed all the qualifications that make a man shine in society. His manners

were graceful and refined, his voice was low, musical, and exquisitely modulated, his eyes were large, dark, luminous, and wonderfully expressive, and there was about him that air of unmistakable distinction, which ordinary men cannot assume, and which few men ever have. Friends and foes agree as to the singular fascination of Poe's conversation. It was my privilege to receive many letters from Mrs. Sarah Helen Whitman in the last years of her life. During her brief engagement to the poet she had the best opportunity to form an opinion of his conversational powers. She said she had heard Walter Savage Landor, who was pronounced the best talker in England; had listened to George William Curtis talk of the gardens of Damascus till the air seemed purpled and perfumed with its roses; had heard the Autocrat's trenchant and vivid talk, had heard the racy talk of Dr. O. A. Brownson in the old days of his freedom and power; had listened to the brilliant and exhaustless colloquial resources of John Neal and Margaret Fuller, and the serene wisdom of Alcott; but, unlike the conversational power of any of these was the earnest, opulent, unpremeditated speech of Edgar Allan Poe. The charm of his conversation was in its genuineness—its wonderful directness and sincerity. What added

The Poe Cult

to the charm of his presence in society was his simple, natural, unconventional courtesy and the perfectly sincere grace of his manner. Mrs. Whitman said that his proud reserve, his profound melancholy, and his entire unworldliness added to the fascination of his personal presence in society.

Poe, unlike his distinguished contemporary, Hawthorne, really enjoyed society, and in whatever city he lived he was a favorite in the most cultivated circles. In his boyhood he was early introduced to the most exclusive society of Virginia's capital. When just emerging from obscurity he made the acquaintance of John P. Kennedy, the Baltimore author, whose novels, *Horseshoe Robinson*, *Swallow Barn* and so forth, were very popular in the first half of the nineteenth century. Mr. Kennedy was a lawyer as well as a writer, and was a member of Congress and Secretary of the Navy under the administration of President Fillmore. His social position was the best in Baltimore at the time when the society of the Monumental City was the most exclusive in America. It was at that time N. P. Willis pronounced Baltimore "The Social Athens of America." Mr. Kennedy invited Poe to his table, gave him a horse to ride, and did everything, as the poet always gratefully remem-

The Poe Cult

bered, to raise him from the depths of despair.

There are few persons now living who knew Poe, but when I first became interested in the poet, I had the good fortune to meet several who were acquainted with him at the most interesting period of his life. The first of these was his aunt and mother-in-law—"more than mother" he said she was to him—Mrs. Maria Clemm. I visited her at the Church Home in Baltimore, where she spent the last years of her life, and where she died on February 16, 1871, it being the same building where Poe died on October 7, 1849. Mrs. Clemm never tired of talking about her "darling Eddie," as she always called the poet. She was fond of speaking of his beautiful manners, of his exquisite taste in dress, and above all things, she loved to tell of the many ladies who admired him. Their friendship was the chief comfort and solace of a life of sorrow, suffering and song. Poe was a worshipper of beauty, and of all beauty, he thought a beautiful woman was the supremest. His sentimental feeling for woman was the delicate, poetical Greek worship of an ideal beauty, so exquisitely personified by Nausica in the *Odyssey*. Proud, solitary, and ambitious, he found in his female friends the sympathy which his mind and heart longed for.

The Poe Cult

In the winter of 1845-46, Poe was the most distinguished visitor in the circles that gathered at the houses of the Honorable John R. Bartlett, Dr. Dewey, Miss Anne C. Lynch, afterward Mrs. Botta, and others who held weekly receptions of the best intellectual society of New York. Mrs. Whitman, in speaking of Poe's social prestige, relates an anecdote showing his habitual courtesy and good nature, which was noticeable to all who best knew him in domestic and social life. The incident occurred at one of the soirées above mentioned. A lady who prided herself on her knowledge of languages, ancient and modern, wished to expose the ignorance of a pretender to classical knowledge, and proposed inviting him to translate a difficult passage in a Greek author, of which language he was profoundly ignorant, although in his writings he was in the habit of sprinkling Greek quotations very profusely. Poe was present upon the occasion, and when he heard of the lady's malicious intention, he remonstrated with her so earnestly that she was induced to forego the embarrassing test.

Another evening Poe engaged in an intellectual controversy with the aggressive and self-opinionated Margaret Fuller. This lady, in her usual "lofty and autocratic style," was annihilating a young author with merciless

scorn. Poe came to the rescue of the vanquished author, and in a few sharp, trenchant remarks destroyed all the effect of the learned lady's eloquence, and completely discomfited her. This was accomplished by Poe in the most polished manner. Some one present whispered, "The Raven has perched upon the casque of Pallas, and pulled all of her feathers out of her cap."

Sometimes, but not often, his child-wife, Virginia, accompanied her husband to these weekly assemblages. She took little or no part in the evening's conversation, but her pride in the poet's brilliant social success illuminated her sweet, girlish face. Mrs. Clemm told me that Virginia, Eddie, and herself formed an ideal family, and that the poet and his young wife were perfectly devoted to each other. In spite of this, it has been cruelly and recklessly asserted that Poe neglected his lovely wife and caused her early death. A shallow English writer, Gilfillan, even went so far as to say that Poe caused the death of his wife that he might have a fitting theme for "The Raven." Mrs. Whitman, commenting upon this horrible and wicked assertion, sarcastically says that a serious objection to this ingenious theory may perhaps be found in the "refractory fact" that the poem was published more than a year be-

The Poe Cult

fore the event which it is assumed it was intended to commemorate.

Another of Poe's friends, Mrs. E. Oakes-Smith, who met him during this time of his greatest social success, at the houses mentioned above, says his manners at these reunions were pleasing and refined, and his style and scope of conversation that of a gentleman and scholar; that he delighted in the society of superior women, and had an exquisite perception of all the graces of manner and shades of expression; and that he was an admiring listener and an unobtrusive observer.

So much abuse has been heaped on Poe's head by ignorant or malicious persons that it is not only a pleasure but a duty to let the world know how he was regarded by those who had the best opportunity of seeing him. There was only one woman in all his social experience who disliked him, and she disliked him because he, very naturally, resented her attempt to destroy his friendship with Mrs. Frances Sargent Osgood, who was one of the loveliest and most accomplished women of her time, and the object of the poet's enthusiastic admiration. In her society he found a never-failing neophyte for his sorrows and troubles. The poet and poetess were congenial spirits, and celebrated

The Poe Cult

their devoted friendship in lines worthy of the most exalted affection.

Mrs. Osgood addressed the following lines to Poe:

I cannot tell the *world* how thrills my heart
To every touch that flies thy lyre along;
How the wild Nature and the wondrous Art
Blend into Beauty in thy passionate song—

But this *I know*—in thine enchanted slumbers,
Heaven's poet, Israfel—with minstrel fire—
Taught the music of his own sweet numbers,
And tuned—to chord with his—thy glorious lyre!

These verses inspired the following delicate response:

To F——s S. O——d.

Thou wouldest be loved?—then let thy *heart*
From its present pathway part not,
Bring everything which now thou art,
Be nothing which thou art not.

So with the world thy gentle ways,
Thy grace—thy more than beauty—
Shall be an endless theme of praise,
And love—a simple duty.

Poe possessed that best of all social qualities—he was a good listener. When he took his pen in hand he was sometimes fierce and aggressive, but in society he was conspicuous for his quiet dignity, his unobtrusive manner, his

The Poe Cult

elegant reserve. He was more impressive and infinitely more agreeable than the tiresome, loquacious, so-called good talkers who often eclipse the gaiety of drawing rooms, and make listeners long for a “few brilliant flashes of silence.”

Poe was extremely fortunate in the “lonesome latter years” which followed the death of his wife to be admitted to the intimate society of Mrs. Annie L. Richmond, of Lowell, Massachusetts. It was this lady to whom the poet addressed his well-known poem, “For Annie,” beginning:

Thank Heaven ! the crisis,
The danger, is past,
And the lingering illness
Is over at last,
And the fever called “Living”
Is conquered at last.

At Mrs. Richmond’s house he met the best society of Lowell, and a gentleman, Mr. Heywood, who was a member of the family, spoke with great enthusiasm of the poet’s demeanor and the grace of his conversation. “I have never seen it equalled,” he said. A lady who was present at Mrs. Richmond’s one evening when Poe was there differed from the poet upon some subject that was under discussion

The Poe Cult

and expressed her opinions very strongly. He listened to her objection with the most perfect deference, and replied to her with the utmost politeness. His conversational tone was low but distinct; he never showed the least excitement even when discussing the most animated subject.

It is the consensus of all who met Poe in society that while he was gentle and refined and seldom attacked any person's opinion, and maintained his own with modest confidence, he took every opportunity to defend any person who was attacked, especially when such person was dead or absent, protecting him or her with the tender grace of charity—that charity which has so seldom been exercised in his behalf, either during life or since his early death.

On rare occasions Poe was persuaded to recite "The Raven" when attending social gatherings in New York, especially when his wife added her request to the entreaties of his host or hostess. It was the opinion of those who heard him that it was a thrilling, an entralling, an overpowering exhibition of fervid frenzy and mental exaltation. Once heard it was never forgotten.

In the last months of the last year of Poe's unhappy life, a gleam of light like that which cheered Sinbad in the Cave of Death, bright-

The Poe Cult

ened the poet's gloomy existence. This was his return to his early home in Richmond, reviving dead memories, and resuming his place in that fine old Virginia society which threw open its hospitable doors to welcome back its most gifted son. But it was the last flicker of life's candle, soon to be extinguished forever by the mournful tragedy of his mysterious death in Baltimore on that fatal autumn morning of October 7, 1849.

RECOLLECTIONS OF EDGAR A. POE.

By the Witnesses of his Life.

Edgar Poe lived and died a mystery to the world, and, although more than a half century has elapsed since his death, to many persons he remains a mystery still.

The intention of the present article is to show Poe in a brighter and lovelier light—to see him as he appeared to the witnesses of his life. During the many years that I have been devoted to the investigation of Poe's life, I have made the acquaintance of several persons who were more or less associated with him from his childhood until his death. They were men and women who spoke of their own knowledge of the poet, and they were, therefore, the most competent witnesses to testify to the truth concerning him.

I was personally acquainted with a gentleman who knew little Edgar when a boy—knew him intimately—who saw him every day. This was Professor Joseph H. Clarke, of Trinity College, Dublin, who was the Principal of an English and classical school in Richmond from 1818 to 1823. [His recollections of Poe will be found elsewhere in this book.]

The Poe Cult

Among Poe's fellow cadets at West Point was Lucius Bellinger Northrop, of South Carolina, afterward the confidential friend of Jefferson Davis and Commissary General of the Confederate Army, and one of the last survivors of Poe's classmates at West Point. Young Northrop was two years Poe's junior, but, even at that early day, he manifested that firm and determined character which distinguished him through life, and made him follow what he believed to be the right, although on one memorable instance it caused a temporary break in his lifelong friendship with Jefferson Davis.

I met General Northrop long after he had retired from public life, and was spending his last years on his farm amid the grand old Blue Ridge Mountains, near Charlottesville, Va. I was a guest at his house, and ascertaining that he had been at West Point with Poe, I lost no time in interviewing him on the subject. His recollection was that Poe was entirely out of place at West Point—that the routine of military duties was utterly repugnant to his tastes: the severe studies, the strict discipline, the roll-call, the morning drill, the evening parade, the guard duty were each and all distasteful to the poetical young dreamer. He was shy, proud, sensitive, and unsociable with the other cadets.

The Poe Cult

He spent more time in reading than in study. This literary taste kept him away from his uncongenial classmates: he was absorbed in his thoughts, his poetical dreams, his golden aspirations, for he was at that time preparing a third edition of his poems for the press, the second having been published in Baltimore, in 1829. The rough sports of the West Point boys—their youthful pranks, their practical jokes, their childish follies—possessed no attractions to the young poet who aspired to be the American Byron, or Shelley.

During his short stay at West Point, Poe made a high reputation for poetical genius, and when it was announced that he intended to publish his poems, great expectations were formed of the book. Gen. Northrop informed me that the cadets eagerly subscribed for the volume. Although he made few friends at West Point, he made no enemies there; or elsewhere, except among the small poets and prose writers whose shortcomings were shown up in his critical capacity.

After leaving West Point, as already mentioned, Poe found a home in the family of his aunt, Mrs. Maria Clemm, in Baltimore. She was his nearest living relative, and the intimacy thus begun was the most fortunate event in the poet's unhappy life. From that

X

time, however dark his prospects, however suffering his condition, however sad his thoughts, this devoted woman, this "more than Mother," as he called her, was always by his side as friend and comforter. I knew Mrs. Clemm in her last years, when she was an inmate of the Church Home, in Baltimore. She was then four score years old. In my youthful admiration of Poe, I sought her out, made her acquaintance, got her to talk about Poe. All the world knows that he married her daughter, Virginia Clemm. But all the world does not know of his constant devotion to his child-wife (she was only fourteen years old at the time of her marriage) in sickness and in health. Mrs. Clemm never tired of speaking about "Eddie's" unceasing love of her daughter, and of his filial affection for herself.

Mrs. Clemm said Poe was most industrious with his pen, and would sometimes sit down at his desk at nine in the morning, and write until six in the evening, finishing five pages of *Graham's Magazine* during that time.

In my enthusiasm I persuaded Mrs. Clemm to visit a photographer's and have her picture taken. When it was finished, she looked at it for some time, and asked "Do I look as old and ugly as that?" (forgetting that forty years had passed since her last picture was painted). It

The Poe Cult

is a copy of that photograph which is used in this article. I continued my visits to her as long as she lived, and when she died, I saw her laid by the side of her "Darling Eddie" in Westminster Churchyard, Baltimore.

It was while Poe was living in Baltimore, with his aunt, that he made his first success in literature, by gaining the \$100 prize, offered by the *Saturday Visitor* for the best tale. The limits of this article will not permit me to give the particulars of this contest, especially as it has been told more than once; but the late John H. B. Latrobe, one of the committee who bestowed the prize, was kind enough to furnish me the following account of the affair, a few years before his death: "John P. Kennedy, Dr. James Miller and I were selected by the publishers of the *Saturday Visitor* to decide the best story and poem for the two prizes, one of \$100 and the other of \$50. We met, one evening, in my back parlor, on Mulberry Street, Baltimore. The MSS. were piled on a table, with a waste basket conveniently at hand. I sat at the head of the table, with Mr. Kennedy on one side, and Dr. Miller on the other, with a decanter of good old sherry and a box of fine havanas between them. Most of the MSS. were utter rubbish, and I, who acted as reader, was getting tired of reading, and

The Poe Cult

the other gentlemen of listening to, the silly love stories, and sillier verses, when at the very bottom of the pile was found a small book, inscribed "A Manuscript Found in a Bottle, and other Tales of the Folio Club," with several poems, including "The Coliseum." We decided that Edgar A. Poe, whose unknown name was found in the envelope that accompanied his MSS., was entitled to both prizes, but the publishers of the *Visitor* did not wish the same person to receive both, and Poe was given \$100 for the best story, and \$50 was awarded to a local versifier."

After the prize was awarded, Poe called upon each of the gentlemen who composed the committee in order to thank them. Mr. Latrobe, who had graduated at West Point, first in his class, and afterward studied law, was impressed by Poe's erect, soldier-like bearing, as well as by the grace and elegance of his manners and the remarkable originality of his conversation. Mr. Latrobe said it was absolutely untrue, as stated by Poe's early biographers, that the prize was awarded to him on account of his beautiful handwriting; the decision of the committee was made because of the "unquestionable genius and great originality of the writer."

On the 17th of March, 1894, I called to see

The Poe Cult

Mr. Gabriel Harrison, at his pretty, artistic home on Madison Street, in Brooklyn. The object of my visit was to learn some particulars of his acquaintance with Poe. He said his personal knowledge of the poet was in 1846-7 when his fame had reached its zenith by the publication of the "Raven." "He read the poem to me from a newspaper," said Mr. Harrison, "and, of course, I was struck with its many beauties, and was delighted to know the man who had the genius to compose so wonderful a piece of alliteration and harmony. When I praised those special and distinctive qualities in the poem, he said, 'alliteration and euphony of words are the genius of poetry.' The next time we met, I said, 'Poe, I am going to recite a fine poem to you; sit down and listen.' I then recited "The Raven." While I was repeating it, his eyes were suffused with tears, and when I got through, he cried, 'My God, Harrison, did I write that?' He then took me by the hand, and said, 'by the power of your elocution, you have made me see beauties in my poem that I did not think it possessed.' From that time he and I became constant companions. Many an afternoon did we walk to a favorite spot on the banks of the East River, where I read to him passages from Shelley and Byron, and heard him express his

The Poe Cult

passionate admiration of the former poet.” Mr. Harrison was a witness of Poe’s devotion to his delicate young wife. “They were in perfect accord: the one was the Harp, the other the Strings upon it, and what the one uttered the other vibrated back the concordance. They were, indeed, ‘two souls with but a single thought, two hearts that beat as one.’ Poe had a melancholy and worried expression of countenance. His voice was a low mezzo tone. His articulation was fine, and from his lips and tongue fell his words like the tones of a well-tuned lute. His soul was all in harmony with perfect sounds, and he was always deeply affected by anything tender and pathetic. Often when he was reading to me, and came to a pathetic passage, the tears would blur his eyes, and he was obliged to hand me the poem to finish. He was always refined. Gentleman was written all over him. His thoughts were elevated; his language inspiring; his ambition high and noble. He was a remarkable man, and when once acquainted with him, he could not be forgotten.”

The fame of Edgar A. Poe has passed into many lands. His genius is one of the greatest intellectual gifts that America has bestowed upon the world. While we are justly proud of him as a poet, we have no cause to be

The Poe Cult

ashamed of him as a man, for the true witnesses of his life prove beyond question that he possessed the very qualities that his enemies have willfully and persistently denied him. From their unbiased testimony, I have shown that he was gentle, affectionate, grateful, and "incapable of dishonor."

POE AS SEEN BY STODDARD, STEDMAN, AND HARRISON.

Of the many biographies of Edgar A. Poe, I cannot say that Richard Henry Stoddard's is the best. In his preface, he makes the bold claim that his "is the only life of Poe written with no intention but that of telling the truth . . . the only life in which the poet's career from beginning to end is clearly and intelligently traced——" that "it deals with facts, and not with fancies," etc. Yet he accepts with childish confidence, and repeats the substance of Dr. Moran's so-called account of Poe's last hours, which was contradicted by the relative of Poe who was present at the deathbed. It is now known that Dr. Moran's statement was purely imaginary. He says that "Poe was taken to the hospital on the morning of the 7th of October, and died about midnight of the same day," that he "was found lying on a bench on Pratt Street Wharf." The facts are that Poe was taken to the hospital on the 3d of October, 1849, where he lingered in an unconscious state until the 7th,

when he died—that he was found at a polling place on Lombard Street. Dr. Moran gives a detailed account of “Poe’s last words.” Here is a specimen: “The arched heavens encompass me, and God has his decrees legibly written upon the frontlets of every human being, and demons incarnate; their goal will be the seething waves of black despair. Where is the buoy, life-boat, ship of fire, sea of brass, shore no more.” Dr. Moran was the resident physician of the hospital, but Poe died in the arms of Dr. William M. Cullan, the physician whose duty it was to attend to the patients; and we have his authority for saying that the wild and incoherent words attributed to the poet were never uttered by him on his deathbed. It is only justice to add that Mr. Stoddard rejects that part of Dr. Moran’s “recollection.”

Mr. Stoddard scrupulously avoids mentioning by name any of the eight biographers of Poe; but he has not scrupled to appropriate their material and incorporate it in his memoir, without any credit whatever. The present writer has, perhaps, suffered more than any other in this respect, especially in the early portion of the memoir. Living in Baltimore, among the friends and relatives of Poe, I have been enabled to gather information not accessible to persons at a distance. That portion

The Poe Cult

of Mr. Stoddard's work relating to the poet's grandfather and to his father's early infatuation for the stage, as well as the whole account of Poe's schooldays in Richmond, is taken from my memoir which was published in 1876. The latter was given to me by Prof. Joseph H. Clarke, Poe's teacher, who was then living in Baltimore at the advanced age of ninety years.

Mr. Stoddard has surpassed the other biographers of Poe in one particular at least—he has invented a birthday for him. He says: "As it might have been on the 19th of February, I have fixed upon that day for his birthday." Certainly an original reason for deciding a man's birthday—because "it might have been." It might have been also on the 19th of May or June. The doctors will have to decide whether Mrs. Poe could have played on the stage on the 24th of February after the birth of her son on the 19th. Mrs. Clemm told me that he was born on the 19th of January, 1809.

Viewing Mr. Stoddard's biographic sketch in the most favorable light, we cannot discover that he has added anything to our knowledge of Poe which had not been made known by previous writers.

We deem it only justice to say that the present reaction in favor of Edgar A. Poe is

The Poe Cult

greatly due to the intelligent appreciation of Mr. Widdleton, the American publisher of his works. He generously aided and encouraged every attempt to vindicate the poet's memory.

Mr. Stedman has written the most careful analysis of Poe's genius that has yet been given to the world. The students and scholars of this and other countries will be glad that he has taken his admirable essay from the soon forgotten pages of a magazine, and preserved it in the exquisitely dainty little volume before us. He has evidently studied Poe's works with conscientious diligence; and, though we do not wholly agree with his estimate of the poet, we frankly admit that nine-tenths of his readers will. He manifests a genuine feeling for the "sensitive feminine spirit," whose life was darkened by sorrow and suffering. He says that Poe was "an apostle of the art that refuses to take its color from a given time or country, and of the revolt against commonplace, and his inventions partook of the romantic and the wonderful. He added to the Greek perception of form the Oriental passion for decoration. All the material of the wizard's craft were at his command. He was not a pupil of Beckford, Godwin, Maturin, Hoffmann, or Fouqué; and yet if these writers were to be grouped we should

The Poe Cult

think also of Poe, and give him no second place among them."

Mr. Stedman pronounces the "Literati" a prose Dunciad; but he does not do full justice to Poe's powerful analytical criticism which drove the dunces from our literary temple. He also depreciates Poe's scholarship: "He easily threw a glamour of erudition about his work by the use of phrases from old authors he had read. It was his knack to cull sentences which, taken by themselves, produce a weird or impressive effect, and to reframe them skillfully. This plan was clever, but it partook of trickery, even in its art." Poe was a consummate literary artist, whose writings are more carefully finished than any American writer of his time. As Kennedy said of him: "His taste was replete with classical flavor, and he wrote in the spirit of an old Greek Philosopher." In conclusion let us say, with Mr. Stedman, that, "instead of recounting Poe's infirmities, and deriding them, we should hedge him round with our protection. We can find one man of sense among a thousand, but how rarely a poet with such a gift!"

Professor James A. Harrison, of the University of Virginia, has edited the most ambitious, the most voluminous, the most vexatious edition of Poe's works that has been vouch-

The Poe Cult

safed to an eagerly expectant world. The first of the seventeen volumes of this edition contains a Biography by Professor Harrison. I have read this Life of Poe with the greatest care, page by page, several times, and I have found it a careless, rambling, disconnected, unscientific piece of work. It displays extraordinary industry in collecting the material, but it is put together with no literary skill: like the would-be magician in the Eastern tale, the writer wants the magic touch. The most interesting portions of the biography are in quotation marks. Professor Harrison writes like an ambitious schoolboy, using all the biggest words in his vocabulary. Here are several specimens:

“In ‘The Philosophy of Composition,’ he (Poe) lifts the lid from the cauldron where glowed the constituent elements of his wonderful poem-philtre and reveals to us its mechanism: the poem was to be about one hundred lines long, made up of equal proportions of Beauty and Quaintness intermingled with Melancholy. A strange and thrilling refrain was to impress this combination on the reader by means of long sonorous o’s and r’s swelling on the ear and the memory in anthem-like undulations, reverberations of waves on the shore, clothed, the whole, in rhythms whose luxuriance of alliteration, susurrus of honeyed vowels and liquids, and rise and fall of Eolian cadences would attune the very soul to melody and make the poem as sweet as the dissolving notes of Apollo’s lute.” (P. 215.)

The Poe Cult

In defending Longfellow from the charge of plagiarism brought against him by Poe, Professor Harrison writes thus:

"Longfellow had access to many languages . . . he would have been more than mortal if assimilable particles of the foreign gold had not clung to his memory and inwrought themselves here and there with the filaments of a most malleable and plastic nature. The student of 'The Golden Legion' feels the Schiller background shimmering through the rich texture of woven gold as the bit of verbal Gobelins is being fingered," &c.

Here is another specimen of Professor Harrison's "fine" writing.

"Poe's work was so strange, so extraordinary, so original as it towered and sparkled in columnar beauty amid the flat commonplace of the time, that it is no wonder if editors were startled and looked askance . . . as one might imagine the aborigines of Nubia gazing at the gorgeous bark of Cleopatra as it swept flashing down the Nile with all its oriental splendor and paraphernalia, a vision of light, perfume, and beauty." (P. 271.)

But this is enough.

Professor Harrison takes a childish delight in airing his scraps of knowledge: he kindly tells us that Poe and the Allans sailed for England "in June, 1815, the day before the Battle of Waterloo." Why not say on June 17, they sailed? He, also, kindly informs us

that, in 1809, the year of Poe's birth, "Madison was President of the United States, Metternich was Prime Minister of Austria, and the Battle of Wagram was fought."

When he comes to speak of Poe at the University of Virginia, Professor Harrison treats us to a history of Albemarle County, in which the University is situated, and describes the surrounding country, not omitting Monticello, the home of Thomas Jefferson, and mentions him, "from his own Parnassus, three miles away, looking down and beholding the spacious vale wherein the cunning magic of his persuasive tongue had evoked a scene of Grecian beauty that breathed the spirit of Old World enchantment"; not forgetting to embellish the picture with this "fine" touch: "The poetic mountain sprites exercise their ingenuity in carving out graceful vales, long undulating slopes, the winding labyrinths of silver rivers, and wooded dells thick with Vallambrosan shades."

When Professor Harrison speaks of Poe in Richmond, he is good enough to remind us that Patrick Henry, "the Great Orator of the Revolution," was buried in that city; also, that John Randolph, of Roanoke, "celebrated for his silvery voice and stinging sarcasm," was "a familiar figure in Richmond streets," etc.

The Poe Cult

Harrison is a man of note, or, rather, Notes, for his seventeen volumes are loaded down with all sorts of notes, and the most notable thing about them is that they are chiefly about things not worth noting. He quotes Poe as saying: "I am naturally anxious that what I have written should circulate as I wrote it, if it circulate at all." Poe left corrected copies of his works, and, although he should be published as he wished, that does not mean that everything he wrote—the sweepings of his library and the scraps from his waste-basket—should be preserved. Nor did he want, or expect, that his works should be printed with every verbal change in different editions forced upon the reader's attention in a series of distracting "notes." An editor should know what to omit and what to retain. Jove sometimes nodded, Shakespeare was not always sublime, Poe wrote many things which his own fastidious taste would not have preserved. Professor Harrison claims great merit for hunting up every little scrappy book notice that Poe wrote, and boasts that he has given to the world, "a new Poe in the realm of criticism." In his eagerness to do something that had not been done before, he not only prints these trifling book notices, but "attributes" to Poe two volumes of criticism which should

The Poe Cult

have been allowed to rest in the grave of dead magazines. In fact, he prints everything by, or supposed to be by, Poe, not even omitting "Big Abel and Little Manhattan," and "Street Paving."

Among the poems *attributed* to Poe, Professor Harrison includes "Alone," which I happen to know is genuine, for I discovered it in the autograph album of Mrs. Balderston, the wife of Judge Balderston, formerly Chief Judge of the Orphans' Court of Baltimore. I had it engraved and published in *Scribner's Monthly*. I gave the poem the name of "Alone," and dated it, as it had neither name nor date, but the poem and signature as published in the magazine are an exact *fac simile* of the writing in the album.

Professor Harrison, Dr. Charles W. Kent, and Dr. R. A. Stewart have formed a Mutual Admiration Society, and have used the Virginia edition of Poe's Works to exploit themselves and show off their "learning," much to their own satisfaction, no doubt, but not to the entertainment of their readers. It works beautifully from a narrow, provincial point of view, but thinking persons only laugh at such transparent folly. A man is written up, or written down by himself, and by himself alone. The thousands of verbal notes scat-

The Poe Cult

tered through the seventeen volumes by these industrious gentlemen, are useless, annoying, and distracting.

In conclusion, I take pleasure in saying that Professor Harrison has my best wishes, but I respectfully advise him, in future, should he undertake to edit a literary work, to do the hunting himself, but to turn the material over to an experienced literary expert; because, with the most friendly feeling, I am compelled to say that, when he tries to be instructive, he becomes laughable; when he tries to be profound, he is silly; when he attempts to sketch Poe's wonderful stories, he is simply ridiculous; and when he attempts to be critical, he is enough to make a stuffed owl die of laughter.

THE "DISCOVERER" OF POE.

Every schoolboy knows who discovered America, but many intelligent men and women do not know who "discovered" Edgar A. Poe. Some years ago, an obscure Englishman claimed to have discovered Poe and made him known to the American people. Not only did this obscure Englishman claim to have introduced Poe to American readers, but he attempted to belittle and read out of court all Americans who presumed to write about their own countryman. But while attempting to undervalue their work, he did not hesitate to appropriate—I like a gentle word—their material. I was a student of Poe's Life and Works before this presumptuous Englishman had emerged from his original obscurity. My early investigations made me acquainted with many facts about Poe which were before unknown, and brought me into contact with persons who knew the poet. It was my privilege to know Mrs. Maria Clemm in the last years of her life, and our conversation was almost entirely about "Eddie" as she always called



MARIE LOUISE SHEW.

him. Much information thus obtained was published in my first—which was a “pioneer”—Life of Poe, issued four years before the Englishman’s pretentious biography had appeared.

I confess I have been astonished at what I have heard regarding the “peculiar” methods this “Discoverer” has used in adding to his Poeana. One of Poe’s best friends at the time when he most needed friends—before, at the time, and immediately after the death of his wife—was Mrs. Mary Louise Shew, afterward Mrs. Harcourt, who nursed him back to life from the desperate illness which followed the death of his wife. With his usual gratitude for favors received, Poe addressed two poems to this lady—“To M. L. S.,” and a poem in blank verse, “To —,” commencing,

“Not long ago, the writer of these lines.”

The “Discoverer” of Poe discovered that the former Mrs. Shew—now Mrs. Harcourt—was in possession of four original poems and many letters from the poet. He wrote to Mrs. Harcourt to aid him in the defence of her friend. In the goodness of her heart, she sent him all the manuscripts, letters, and a miniature of Poe’s mother, Elizabeth Poe. Among these poems was the original first draft of

“The Bells,” which was written at Mrs. Shew’s suggestion. This is a manuscript of priceless value. I have been furnished with the following extracts from the “Discoverer’s” letters to Mrs. Harcourt and her daughter, Mrs. William Wiley:

“January 28, 1875—I have not returned the letter from Poe, enclosed in your daughter’s, as I think I should like it lithographed, if you do not see any objection.”

“March 12, 1875—I have carefully read through, and taken notes of your most interesting 44 pages. . . . You have a portrait of Poe’s mother. I should so value a copy, and would gladly pay for it, if you would have it copied? Will you allow this?” (Mrs. Harcourt sent him the original.)

“April 16, 1875—I am just sending you a few lines to acknowledge your kind letters, and to let you know that the two poems are safely to hand. These latter I will take every care of, and should like to have fac similes taken of them, if you do not object.”

“March 11, 1876—A French translation of Poe’s Poems is shortly to be published in Paris. May I let them have a fac simile made of the shorter of the two poems addressed to you? The larger one I do not want to appear anywhere but in my forthcoming Life of Poe.”

The Poe Cult

“February 24, 1876—Your copies of Poe’s poems are perfectly safe, and I am keeping them until I can have them fac similed for the Life. I guard them as the apple of my eye!”

“May 27, 1879 (to Mrs. Wiley)—I have not completed my Life of Poe, and not deeming, from your kind mamma’s correspondence, that there ever would be any haste for the return of the poems, I do not hurry. Of course, now you and your sister stand in her place, and as soon as I hear from you again, I will forward them to you.”

“January 22, 1880—Mr. —— has received Mrs. Wiley’s letter of December 22, 1879, and will reply to it in a few days, and will return the poems asked for as soon as he can find them among Mrs. Harcourt’s letters and papers, doubtless within the week.” (Note by Mr. Wiley.) “He had to hunt among Mrs. Harcourt’s papers for what he ‘guarded as the apple of his eye.’ One poem, ‘To M. L. S.,’ was returned in June, 1880.”

The “Discoverer” claimed that Mrs. Harcourt gave him certain of the poems, and the letters, and in one of his last communications to Mrs. Wiley, he said he had her letter, and would show it to any friend. Mrs. Wiley says that such a proposition as giving away anything written by Poe was not thought of,

The Poe Cult

talked of, or written about. Mrs. Gove-Nicholls, who knew Mrs. Shew, and took her to see the Poes at Fordham, told the "Discoverer" about the friendship between Poe and Mrs. Shew, and hence the correspondence.

Mr. Wiley writes me that "It is unreasonable to suppose that my mother (Mrs. Harcourt), who treasured these precious memorials of Poe for over twenty-five years, showing them often to her children and friends, would *give* them to a stranger in a foreign land. You know that Poe wrote "The Bells" in her library. The story of its origin is true. More than anything else she prized that poem. After her death, her children, inspired by her feeling for the poet, kept, as a sacred object, the table on which the first draft of "The Bells" was written. They learned to reverence everything that came to them through their mother's relations to the poet."

POE AND THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA.

When the University of Virginia announced a four days' celebration of the Centennial of the birth of Edgar A. Poe, I was astonished to see Professor Barrett Wendell, of Harvard University, named as the principal speaker upon the occasion. I expressed my astonishment in the following communication to the Baltimore *American*:

To THE EDITOR: It is right, proper, and just that the University of Virginia should celebrate the centennial of the birth of Edgar Allan Poe, her most distinguished alumnus. Few American universities can boast of such a son and in honoring him it does a greater honor to herself. But why this long-delayed recognition of Poe's genius—why wait until Through many a year his fame has grown,
Like midnight, vast; like sunlight, sweet,
Till now his genius fills a throne
And nations marvel at his feet.

During his life of sorrow, suffering, and song his alma mater said no word of encour-

The Poe Cult

agement—it offered him no chair, no reward, no fellowship, when

Unmerciful disaster
Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one
burden bore—
Till the dirges of his hope that melancholy burden bore
Of “never—nevermore.”

When the University of Virginia offers her tardy tribute to Poe 100 years after his birth, why does she select a New Englander to be the principal speaker upon the occasion—Prof. Barrett Wendell, of Harvard University? Is the South so destitute of literary men that its leading university could not find a Southern man to honor the memory of its greatest poet?

Astonished as I am that the University of Virginia should select Professor Wendell to do honor to Poe, my wonder grows that he should accept the invitation, in view of his deliberately expressed opinion of the poet in his “Literary History of America,” where he denounces Poe as “a man, in his life, of doubtful repute,” adding that “his life was ugly, sinful, sordid,” and that “there are a thousand errors in his personal life.” I am not surprised that he should express such an opinion of Poe’s life when he displays such ignorance of what he is talking about. Here are a few specimens: “In 1826 he was for a year at the Uni-

The Poe Cult

versity of Virginia, where his career was brought to an end by a gambling scrape."

So Professor Wendell accepts, with childish credulity the oft-disproved story of Rufus W. Griswold. Again: "The story goes that he—Poe—was passing through Baltimore either on his way to see his betrothed, or on his way from a visit to her." Such ignorance is truly refreshing. Here is another: "Some petty politicians . . . picked him up . . . and made him vote all over town. Having thus exhausted his political usefulness, they left him in the gutter, from whence he found his way to a hospital, where he certainly died."

It is certainly true that Poe died in a hospital, and that is one grain of truth in Professor Wendell's last statement. Let us hope that he has read some of the dozen lives of Poe that have been written since Griswold's mendacious biography and that he knows more about Poe's life than he did when he wrote his "Literary History of America," otherwise his audience at the University of Virginia celebration on January 19 will not only be astonished, but, I fear, disappointed and disgusted.

EUGENE L. DIDIER.

1722 North Calvert Street.

The Poe Cult

This letter fell like an unexpected bombshell among the faculty of the University of Virginia, in the midst of their pretentious attempt to "honor" Poe upon his centenary. One of the professors, who is said to have secured his professorship through the generosity of his sister-in-law, who denoted \$60,000 for the foundation of the chair which he occupies, was so incensed at the severe truths in my article that, he wrote me a letter so furious, so frantic, and so foolish that his more sensible wife persuaded him not to send it.

Does this provincial professor suppose that I, a man of the world, I who have traveled in many lands, and met some of the greatest men of Europe and America—would care for his petulant and childish anger?

The University of Virginia showed no interest in Poe until the Semi-Centennial of his death, October 7, 1899, when, "with many a flirt and flutter," a bust of the poet was unveiled in an alcove of the Rotunda Library. Hamilton W. Mabie was chosen to deliver the address upon the occasion. I have nothing to say about the propriety of selecting a Northern man to eulogize a Southern poet. I do not propose to question the ability of the South to furnish a speaker for such an occasion, but I do not hesitate to say, and I wish to say it most

The Poe Cult

emphatically, that the selection of Mr. Mabie, or any other Northern man, was a direct and distinct insult—a slap in the face of every man of letters in the South; an open slur upon hundreds of men who were quite as capable of eulogizing their poet as Mr. Mabie, or any other Northern man. If the committee having the matter in charge intended to proclaim the literary poverty of the South, it is an admission which I, for one, will never make. Mr. Mabie was the wrong man for the place, but he did show a certain appreciation of Poe, when he announced that he was entitled to the first place in American letters by virtue of possessing a most exact literary conscience and producing works of the clearest and finest art.

The connection of Poe with the University of Virginia is the most interesting fact in its history, yet, it completely ignored him until half a century after his death, when it joined in the chorus of the world's applause. This late recognition of America's greatest genius does not reflect much credit upon his Alma Mater. The "meed of justice" was so "long delayed," that the University of Virginia deserves the disgraceful reproach of treating her most illustrious son with the cold and heartless indifference of a stepmother, instead of

The Poe Cult

cherishing him with the tender and loving care of a fond and devoted parent.

When the University of Virginia sought to make amends for its belated recognition of Poe, the Committee having charge of the Centennial celebration, stultified itself most ignominiously by inviting Professor Barrett Wendell to deliver the principal address. The Committee was either grossly ignorant of American literature, or insultingly defiant of Southern feeling when it selected such a man for such an occasion—a man who had shown himself disgracefully ignorant of Poe's life, and outrageously prejudiced against him.

The selection of this Harvard professor to deliver the principal address at the Poe Centennial is most extraordinary in view of the fact that Dr. Charles William Kent is the Literary Editor of a "Library of Southern Literature," which claims to be "a scholarly venture," "Southern in tone," whose "purpose is the frank and patriotic desire to lay more deeply the foundations of our greatness, by establishing that not New England alone, but the South as well, has enjoyed the gift of utterance." Yet, in the face of this declaration, a New England professor was invited to take the leading part in "honoring" Edgar A. Poe. It was a piece of amazing folly unsurpassed

The Poe Cult

in the annals of literature, since letters were first invented, or since the Father of Poetry sang his immortal songs through the cities of Greece. However, we should not be so astonished at this foolish action of the Committee of the University of Virginia, when we remember that the President of that institution awarded the prize of one hundred dollars offered by the United Daughters of the Confederacy for the best essay on "Robert E. Lee," to Miss Christine Boysen, of Minnesota, who spoke of what Lee did as "*treason*," that he "chose the *wrong side*," etc. Dr. Alderman, either did not read the essay before awarding the prize, or he agreed with the writer of the essay who pronounced General Lee a "*traitor*." In either case, he is unfit to be the President of the leading University of the South.

THE CENTENNIAL OF THE BIRTH OF EDGAR A. POE.

The splendor of Poe's fame, the extraordinary and distinct quality of his genius, and the universality of its recognition, made the Centennial of his birth on the 19th of January, 1909, one of the most interesting events in the literary history of the United States, if not in the world.

When Edgar A. Poe was born, it would have required an astrologer of divine gifts to have drawn the horoscope of his life. The child of strolling players, left a destitute orphan at the age of two years, brought up in luxury, taught to expect to inherit a splendid fortune, he was turned out on the world at the most critical period of his youth without experience, without a guide, without a dollar, but, by the divine right of genius, he has conferred more glory upon American literature than any other American writer, and taken a place among the few, the immortal names that are not born to die. Other writers of his time lived, wrote, and died, and in the course of a

The Poe Cult

few years, their works were forgotten, and their lives possess no interest to the generations that succeeded them. Who reads Willis, Halleck, Hoffman, Drake, Paudling, Whipple, Tuckerman, Headley, Simms, and others—how few now read even Bryant, Lowell, Longfellow, Irving, Prescott, and Cooper? While these once prominent writers are forgotten, or seldom read, edition after edition of Poe's Works are required to supply the ever-increasing demand. Twelve lives of Poe have been published, and the end is not yet. Magazine and newspaper articles, more or less false, are eagerly read.

The universal voice of two continents has pronounced Edgar A. Poe the most extraordinary genius of the nineteenth century. After a life of sorrow, suffering, and song, he died when a better and a brighter day was about to dawn upon the "unhappy Master of 'The Raven,'" who had lived and died a mystery to the world, to his friends, and to himself. He died under a cloud, and for a quarter of a century, his name and fame were blackened by the vindictive malice of his enemies. The literary lion died, and asses kicked and mangled the defenceless poet; with fiendish delight, the literary jackals revelled in

The Poe Cult

their prey. The malice of Poe's defamers was only equalled by their ignorance.

"In this dismal room fame was won," said Hawthorne, after the *Scarlet Letter* had made him famous. He had waited long and patiently for fame to come to him: for more than ten years he was "the most obscure literary man in America," as he said of himself. He was nearly fifty years old when he ceased to be "the most obscure literary man in America," and became one of the most famous. To Poe fame came early in life: before he was twenty-seven years old he had acquired a national reputation by his tales and criticisms. He was only thirty-four when "The Raven" was published, which showed him to be the most original writer of his time. But, after his tragical and untimely death—he was only forty—in the full splendor of his mental vigor, his name and fame passed under a cloud which grew blacker and blacker, until, in the course of time, America rejected her most marvelous genius, and worshipped at the shrine of false poetical idols. He passed so absolutely out of the world's thoughts that even the time and place of his birth were uncertain, and the time of death and the place of his burial were unknown.

The unveiling of the Poe monument, in Bal-

The Poe Cult

timore, on the 17th of November, 1875, started a revival of interest in the life and works of Poe. Since which time no American, and few writers of any nation, have been so written about in books, magazines, and newspapers. Careful and systematic investigation has discovered that he possessed the very virtues and attributes—gratitude, sincerity, and affection—which were denied to him by his early biographers. To the Honorable John P. Kennedy, his first literary friend, he always expressed the most unbounded gratitude on every occasion. In a letter dated Richmond, Va., January 22, 1836, after speaking of his restored health and bright prospects, he says: “I shall never forget to whom all this happiness is, in a great degree to be attributed. I know without your timely aid I should have sunk under my trials.” From a letter of Mr. Kennedy to Poe, dated Baltimore, December 22, 1834, we learn that Poe was paid only one dollar a printed page for his contributions to Miss Leslie’s “Souvenir,” one of those namby-pamby “Annuals,” “Keepsakes,” or “Gift-Books,” which flourished in England and the United States between 1830 and 1850.

The amazing growth of Poe’s fame is shown by the extraordinary prices that the first editions of his works command in the book auc-

The Poe Cult

tion market, and by the universal interest in everything connected with his works, and especially with his life. One of the tests of an enduring literary rank is that of cosmopolitan approval. That Poe stands this test is shown by his rank as a world-poet. An American writer, who is not especially noted for bestowing indiscriminate praise—Prof. William P. Trent, of Columbia University—declares that Poe is a “Prince in the Court of Fame,” and that the “Palm of immortality is upon his head.”

Naturally, the great occasion of the Poe Centennial caused many articles to be published about the poet in the newspapers and magazines. Most of these articles were inspired by either ignorance, indifference, or injustice. It is a singular fact that, even at this late day, when so much has been written about Poe, it is impossible for the average writer to tell the simple truth about him. The poet’s portrait, as drawn by the press, resembles a ruined palace attempted to be restored by unskillful apprentices, in which stately columns stand in the midst of ghastly desolation, and once beautiful frescoes are bespattered with mud.

The early biographers of Poe were actuated by envy and malice, and invented lies to

The Poe Cult

blacken his name and cloud his fame. No offence was too grave, no crime too monstrous for the diabolical ingenuity of his enemies to lay at his door. The world read, wondered, and believed. The devil's work that the immortally infamous Griswold did was in accepting the position of Poe's biographer and editor, when his heart was full of hate and malice. The law of biography is that the best should be told, and when this false biographer told the evil things about Poe, the world believed that he had made the best of a bad story; and, thus an injustice was done to Poe that still overshadows his memory. Dr. Goldwin Smith, in the garrulosity of old age, prates of Poe as being untrue to his art. Either Dr. Smith has not read Poe's works, or he has outlived the capability of understanding them. All readers of Poe know that he was true to his art even in his slightest story, and this fidelity has caused him to be regarded as one of the most artistic writers that has enriched the literature of the world.

The most laughable ignorance about Poe was displayed by a writer who claims to be a relative of the poet. A magazine of some standing was found easy enough to publish this absurd article in which Baltimore is claimed as the birthplace of the author of

The Poe Cult

“The Raven.” Baltimore was, undoubtedly, the right place for the birthplace of our poet, but, unfortunately, fate decreed that he was born in Boston, a city which he heartily despised. The article under discussion contains scarcely a correct statement; I have neither time nor space to mention all of them. These will suffice: speaking of the present Holliday Street Theatre, Baltimore, she says, “fifty years ago a noble player folk thronged its board. There in the dim ago, stood young Elizabeth Arnold, afterward the mother of Edgar Allan Poe.” The old Holliday Street Theatre was not opened until the Spring of 1812, months after Elizabeth Poe’s death; it was burned down on the 10th of September, 1873, and the present theatre erected, so “fifty years ago, a noble player folk” could not have “thronged its boards.” In a rambling sort of a way the article goes on to speak of Poe’s “wanderings in Greece and Turkey.” All intelligent readers know that Poe never went to Greece and Turkey. She further says that “Mrs. Allan died while Poe was at West Point.” In fact, Mrs. Allan died on the 28th of February, 1829, and Poe did not enter West Point until July 1, 1830. She says “Mrs. Clemm died only a few years ago.” Mrs. Clemm died on February 16, 1871. She says

The Poe Cult

John P. Kennedy, one of the committee who awarded the prize to Poe, "was, afterward, Postmaster General under President Tyler." He was nothing of the kind—he was Secretary of the Navy under President Fillmore. Speaking of Poe's strange, mysterious death, she says, "on the night of October 4, 1849, he arrived in Baltimore from Richmond, by train." On the contrary, he left Richmond by boat and arrived in Baltimore on the morning of the 3d of October. She says, further, that he "was drugged by Plug Uglies, by whom he was voted around the city." In fact, the political roughs known as Plug Uglies were not heard of in Baltimore until nearly ten years after Poe's death, that is to say, about 1857. Again, she says he "was found on the steps of the old Baltimore Museum, corner of Baltimore and Calvert Streets." He was found at the Fourth Ward polls, on Lombard Street, between High and Exeter Streets. She says he "was followed to the grave by Mrs. Clemm and a few classmates." Mrs. Clemm did not know of his death until after he was buried, and only one of his classmates attended the funeral—Z. Collins Lee, afterward Judge of the Superior Court of Baltimore. She calls Sarah *Helen* Whitman Sarah *Osgood* Whitman. The article, from beginning to end, is a tissue of er-

The Poe Cult

rors. How such stuff gets printed would be a wonder did we not know how profoundly ignorant is the run of magazine editors.

Amid the almost universal pæans of praise, of national pride, and international appreciation evoked by the Centennial of the birthday of Edgar A. Poe, a few discordant notes were heard, piped by puny, petty, petulant men and women, who are either grossly ignorant of the poet's life and works, or envious of his splendid fame. While these few shallow, discredited American critics employed falsehood, insinuation, and vituperation in a vain attempt to belittle their own poet, the English reviewers celebrated the centenary of Poe's birth by articles distinguished by rare and discriminating appreciation, by fine literary style, exquisite culture, and ripe scholarship.

As a specimen of the narrow-minded spirit still prevailing in some portions of this country, it is only necessary to quote the language of Professor Arthur D. Hadley, of Yale University, in attempting to explain the second rejection of Poe for a place in the so-called Hall of Fame: "Because nearly everything he wrote reads like the work of a man who was occasionally intemperate, and who did not habitually pay his debts."

The Poe Cult

What folly! What supreme ignorance! How convincing such a statement is that your college professor, outside of his own narrow sphere, is the most ignorant of men, excepting a police officer.

Strange that men so fastidious in regard to the moralities could conscientiously vote for Henry Ward Beecher, or Ralph Waldo Emerson, who pronounced John Brown a "saint," or John Greenleaf Whittier, who was an avowed Abolitionist. Poe's scorn of mediocre men would have made him unwilling to be in such ill-sorted company as this absurd attempt at an American Valhalla has gathered together by the votes of ignorant and prejudiced electors.

All true friends of Poe should rejoice at the colossal stupidity which has kept him out of this incongruous and heterogeneous mess. Can we imagine a French Hall of Fame without Victor Hugo—an English Hall of Fame without Byron—a German Hall of Fame without Goethe? And Poe was an archangel of virtue compared with these famous men.

The asinine conduct of the electors of our so-called Hall of Fame inspired the blind-poet of the South, Father Tabb, to write this quatrain:

The Poe Cult

Into the charnal Hall of Fame
None but the dead should go;
Then carve not there the living name
Of Edgar Allan Poe.

Some men have been foolish enough to say that Shakespeare was no poet. Shallow, narrow-minded critics have said that Poe was no genius. The world has decided otherwise. Ignorant people have said that Poe's wonderful poems and tales were the work of a madman or a drunkard. It is a well-known fact that crazy people believe all others insane. The conclusion is irresistible that those persons who say Poe was mad because he wrote such marvelous poems and tales are themselves fit subjects for the lunatic asylum, or the strait-jacket. As to those splendid works emanating from the brain of a drunkard, I have only to say that it would be well to supply some of the present American authors with the same brand of whisky that inspired Poe so that our literature would be more worthy of our place as the foremost nation of the world.

Compared with his detractors, Poe's genius is that of the electric search light to a tallow candle. The small fry of American literature cannot harm the author of "The Raven" by their malice and mendacity: he is too far above them to be hit by their pointless arrows.

When Alexander the Great was asked

The Poe Cult

whether he would contend at the Olympian Games, he answered royally: "Yes, if Kings are my antagonists." So, I claim that Edgar A. Poe should be judged by his peers, if any can be found, and not by the small fry of American literature, such as some of those who have bobbed up in this his centennial year.

A handful of fanatics, mad with impotent rage, rush out of the desert, and hurl their javelins at the Pyramids. The furious fanatics retire, in confusion, to their desert home, leaving the Pyramids unharmed by their futile frenzy. They stand, the imperishable monuments of the ancient, and the admiration of the modern, world. So the fame of Edgar A. Poe has outlived the vicious but impotent attacks of envy, stupidity, imbecility, and mediocrity.

Availing himself of the universal interest in Poe on account of his centennial, an obscure writer in *Scribner's Magazine* attempted to dress himself in a little brief notoriety by attacking a literary artist whose intellectual shoes he is not worthy to loose. We all know who Edgar Poe is, but who is this obscure scribbler—what has he done in literature that qualifies him to judge such a man as the author of "The Raven"? He shall not enjoy even the unenviable infamy of Griswold, for

The Poe Cult

he is one of the unknown writers whom the world will willingly let die. Careful research and systematic investigation having exposed the lies told of Poe by his earlier biographers, later writers have attempted to depreciate his genius, but, in this they have succeeded, not in endangering Poe's fame, for that is world-wide, but simply in writing themselves down as being of the long-eared kind, to use no harsher term. Poe's Works stand, and will ever stand as the imperishable monuments of his rare and remarkable genius. There they are. They cannot be written out of the world's literature by the puny attacks of ignorant, malicious, and jealous scribblers. Unfortunate would it be for American literature should the impotent ravings of such poor creatures be heeded.

I determined not to lend even my mite to keep alive the ignoble names of the later defamers of Poe. One journal of infamous history opened its columns to articles inspired by jaundiced imbecility, premeditated malice, and vulgar spite. Oh, for the powerful pen of Poe to strike down these wretched scribblers who, in their mad jealousy, have assailed the master-genius of American literature in the hour of his glory. One of these writers is so ignorant of American literary biography that he speaks of Poe as a native of Virginia, and

The Poe Cult

of the exquisite Maryland poet, Edward C. Pinkney, as a South Carolinian! Think of such an ignoramus having the audacity to attempt to belittle Edgar A. Poe, whose genius is the admiration of two continents and the glory of his own! Think of such a man daring to speak of Poe's stories, which have filled the world with wonder, as "apprenticepieces!" Think of such a man who writes rubbish which no intelligent person can read, and which have long since been thrown on the trash pile—think of such a man, who has no more imagination than a street-digger—having the supreme insolence to say that Poe has no imagination, when all the world has wondered at his astonishing imagination! Think of such a man having the effrontery to say that "this generation is doing work entirely surpassing Poe's in beauty." Where is this wonderful work? Certainly not in this fellow's terrible trash. Poe's works are eagerly read sixty years after his death, while it is impossible to read this fellow's realistic rubbish, although he is still alive. He, also, says that the "leading magazines of the present day would not have Poe, if he were writing now, and the theatres would no more have Shakespeare." No doubt, the magazines that print his stuff would not "have" Poe's fine, artistic work. He says,

further, he could not give his whole heart to more than three or four of his pieces, and in these not to above a stanza or two." He says" of "The Raven" itself, I would willingly part with far the greater portion, and I would bestow in charity the untouched entirety of the 'Ulalumes,' and 'Lenores,' and 'Annabel Lees,' and others of that make, but I should like to keep for myself . . . nearly all of the poem, 'To Helen,' because of two lines:

To the glory that was Greece
And the grandeur that was Rome.

Such criticism is worthy of a crude, shallow, uncultured mind—to deprecate the exquisite gems which the world has admired for over sixty years, and to praise two lines of a juvenile poem written at the age of fourteen! It is a silly, transparent, mean attempt to destroy Poe's poetical reputation, but such criticism is taken for what it is worth by the reading public, and it is worth nothing at all. Literature to me is a "dainty goddess," and I cannot bear to see it drest in the garb of imbeciles and pretenders.

In striking contrast with the disparaging tone of some so-called American critics was the exalted praise bestowed upon Poe by European scholars and critics. An eminent French

writer, Teodor de Wyzewn, declares in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, that "Poe's verse is the most magnificent which the English language possesses, and his poems masterpieces of emotion and music." Baudelaire makes American materialism responsible for Poe's misfortunes. He is not very complimentary in speaking of our country, saying "this barbarity—referring to America—crushed, villified, murdered him." Poe, according to Baudelaire, "in this seething mass of mediocrity and commonplace, cared only for the exceptional, and painted it with rare beauty and exquisite art." Another French writer, Barbey d'Aurevilly, treats Poe as "the most beautiful thing which that offscouring of humanity—America—has produced." Poe, stranded "on that desert waste was trampled to death by the elephantine feet of American materialism." Still another Frenchman, Peladan, in his introduction to a translation of Poe's Poems, attacks this land "without civilization, without art, without nationality, without a language, as the murderer of the greatest genius of the nineteenth century."

Twenty-three editions of Poe's Works have been published in France where he is regarded as a native writer. This unique distinction makes him a world-poet.

The Poe Cult

Among German scholars, Poe enjoys the first place as poet and prose writer. Dr. Eric Schmidt, of the University of Berlin, sees in Poe's works "the rare union of the boldest fancy and the keenest intelligence." Professor Wulker, of the University of Leipsic, pronounces him "the first poet of North America." Dr. William Victor, of the University of Marburg, says, "the cultivated world owes much to Poe's genius." England is equally enthusiastic. Swinburne, her leading poet, speaks of Poe's "strong and delicate genius—so sure of aim, and faultless of touch, in all the better and finer part of work he has left us." He adds: "I take leave to express my firm conviction that, widely as the fame of Poe has already spread, and deeply as it is already rooted in Europe, it is even now growing wider and striking deeper as time advances; the surest presage that time, the eternal enemy of small and shallow reputations, will prove, in this case also, the constant and trusty keeper of a true poet's full-grown fame." Maurice Hewlett writes, "Nothing that I could say could add to Edgar Poe's fame. So far as Europe is concerned, he is sure of his immortality." Israel Zangwell says, "while nobody has been able to imitate his poetry, his prose has created a school in France, in Germany, and in

The Poe Cult

England." George Bernard Shaw places Poe above Tennyson, Dickens, Thackeray, and speaks of his "superb distinction" as an author, and pronounces him "the most classical of modern writers." Walter A. Raleigh, of Oxford University, writes "I have the profoundest admiration for Poe, and his influence on European literature has been enormous."

A writer in the *Nation* of January 14, 1909, Curtis H. Page, declares emphatically that Poe "is vastly superior to all his American rivals for fame, as an artist pure and simple, whether in the short story, or in verse. Therefore, he is the one American who has been accepted and acclaimed by the majority of intelligent Frenchmen."

After all of these magnificent tributes to Poe's genius, the discordant croakings of his detractors will have no more effect upon the established fame of our poet than the hooting of a night-owl has upon the destiny of nations.

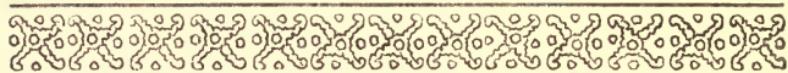
THE END.



OUR NEWEST ISSUES

By Wilbert C. Blakeman.	
The Black Hand.....	1.50
By John W. Bennett.	
Roosevelt and the Republic.....	1.50
By Hon. Joseph M. Brown. (Governor of Georgia.)	
Astyanax—An Epic Romance.....	1.50
By John Tracy Mygatt.	
What I Do Not Know of Farming.....	.75
By Esmee Walton.	
Aurora of Poverty Hill.....	1.50
By Josephine Merwin Cook.	
Bandana Days75
By Howard James.	
The Wraith of Knopf and Other Stories.....	1.00
By George Fuller Golden.	
My Lady Vaudeville and Her White Rats....	2.00
By J. A. Salmon-Maclean.	
Leisure Moments	1.00
A Stricken City.....	.50

OUR NEWEST ISSUES



By Alexandre Erixon.

The Vale of Shadows..... 1.50

By Mrs. Josephine M. Clarke.

The King Squirrel of Central Park (Juvenile). .60

By William N. Freeman.

St. Mammon 1.50

By Mrs. I. Lowenberg.

The Irresistible Current..... 1.50

By M. Y. T. H. Myth.

Tales of Enchantment..... 1.00

A Tale Confided by the Woods..... .75

By Ida Blanche Wall.

Comedy of Petty Conflicts..... 1.25

By Elizabeth Helene Freston.

Poems (portrait) beautifully bound..... 1.00

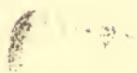
Italia's Fornarina (leather)..... 3.00

Compiled by Darwin W. Esmond.

Poetry of Childhood, by Paul Warner Esmond
(Memorial Edition) 1.50

OUR NEWEST ISSUES

By James A. Ritchey, Ph.D.	
Psychology of the Will.....	\$1.50
By Charles Hallock, M. A.	
Peerless Alaska	1.00
By Dwight Edwards Marvin.	
Prof. Slagg of London.....	1.50
The Christman	1.50
By Caroline Mays Brevard.	
Literature of the South.....	1.50
By Susan Archer Weiss.	
Home Life of Poe (3d ed.).....	1.50
By Irving Wilson Voorhees, M.D.	
Teachings of Thomas Henry Huxley (2d ed.).	1.00
By Mrs. Annie Riley Hale.	
Rooseveltian Fact and Fable.....	1.00
By Hon. D. W. Higgins.	
The Mystic Spring.....	1.50
By Edith Nicholl Ellison.	
The Burnt-Offering	1.25



Teas

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY
BERKELEY

14 DAY USE
RETURN TO DESK FROM WHICH BORROWED
LOAN DEPT.

This book is due on the last date stamped below, or
on the date to which renewed.
Renewed books are subject to immediate recall.

APR 30 1987 53	REC CIRC FEB 21 1993 RECEIVED MAY 11 1995 CIRCULATION DEPT
RECEIVED APR 30 '87-2 PM	DEC 06 2004
DEC 11 1979	OCT 08 2005
1/11/80 - mark Return date JAN 7 1980	
JAN 14 1993	

LD 21A-60m-7, '66
(G4427s10)476B

General Library
University of California
Berkeley

U. C. BERKELEY LIBRARIES



CO42552520

255
958 P
7105

21-758

Binder

